

MINISTERIAL ROLES AND INSTITUTIONAL RESTRAINTS:  
THE MISSISSIPPI CONFERENCE OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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## ABSTRACT

Nearly two hundred United Methodist ministers have left the Mississippi Annual Conference between 1955 and 1974. Their reasons for leaving have varied from personal problems to racial issues, from the physical climate to church politics. After reviewing responses to a questionnaire mailed by the author to pastors who have left the Conference, the ministers within the Conference, and the current seminary students, this author concluded that the central problem for the pastor within the Mississippi Conference was his/her relationship to the institutional church - in this case the annual conference. Theologically and practically, how can a minister handle conflict within the institutional church without feeling that it is necessary to leave the institution?

One chapter traces the relationship of the minister's roles to the institutional restraints evident during six contexts in church history. Understandings of the church, the ministry, and various conflicts are typified. Because the problem is partly a Methodist one, the ministerial role vis-a-vis the institutional church in the theology of John Wesley is discussed. In order to look at more recently related issues, another chapter discloses suggestions from pastors who have left the ministry completely. Their theology of the church and ministry is discussed and some practical points of help are listed.

While they are certainly different from the ministers who have left only an annual conference, the similarities are frequently striking.

Bearing in mind the central problem, I then define my own concept of church and ministry contextually - in my own situation in space and time. In the attempt to understand theologically the relationship between the Mississippi pastor and his Annual Conference, a theological model for discussing church conflict is presented. Four problematical directions and four possibilities are suggested. The dangers for the ministers who left are those of separation and radicalism, as opposed to the possibilities of diversity and transformation. The dangers for the ministers in the conference are traditionalism and conformity, as opposed to the possibilities of contextuality and community. The minister within the Conference who is having trouble, as well as the student contemplating his/her return to the Conference to serve in ministry, is asked to make a "contextuating" decision about their relationship to the Conference - a theologically thorough decision which involves them in their understanding of the church and the ministry relevant to their own context.

Finally, nineteen practical suggestions are made to the seminary students, the ministers within the Conference, and the United Methodist Church as a whole in order that the Mississippi Annual Conference might function more theologically and effectively as a means of grace.

Appendices include samples of the questionnaires, statistics of the responses, and a list of the names of all the ministers who have left the Conference between 1955-74. The author also has available upon written request confidentially-insured paragraphs written on the questionnaires by the respondents about the central focus.

## PREFACE

This year I will finish my seminary education, and like other United Methodist seminary students who are about to receive their basic professional degree, I am anticipating my future relationship to an annual conference and my responsibility within that structure. Unlike many of these students I am faced with the decision about what conference I will choose to serve in my ministry.

I would guess that most United Methodist seminary students do not make this a conscious decision. They accept the fact that, upon graduation from seminary, they will return to their own "home" annual conference for their ministry. Sometimes, when seminary students marry persons from annual conferences in different geographical areas, they must decide along with their spouses in which area of the country they would like to live. But for the United Methodists this kind of decision-making is the exception rather than the rule. Unlike other American denominations of the presbyterial or congregational order, whose churches call their ministers from all over the country, the United Methodists locate their ministers in one limited geographical area. The minister is usually not encouraged to leave that particular conference.

For reasons not merely personal, which I will be working out in this paper, I feel the intense need consciously to raise this question: Should I return to the

Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church, or should I consider another annual conference in the South, or in another part of the country? This blunt question then is my starting point and, as I shall demonstrate in the first chapter, is not an isolated inquiry from one peculiar renegade. There are many persons from this and other conferences who have formulated this question in the past. Many continue to ask this question in the present.

This personal question has been an important professional issue which our conference has not faced seriously, and raises many more questions and issues most of which cannot completely be answered at this time. A hot issue has many sparks which find a way of igniting in various problem areas. Therefore, I will have to confine this study to a central issue which will surface at the end of the first chapter: the relationship of the individual minister to the institutional church to which he/she belongs.

Before I introduce the methodology of this study, a brief personal confession is required. I will not be returning immediately to my annual conference after this basic professional degree, but I will enter graduate school for a few years. Although I have decided to do this advanced work and may therefore be serving in ministry at times as a teacher rather than as a leader of a local parish, I am still an active ordained minister of the United Methodist Church and a probationary member of the Mississippi Annual Conference. In this regard I am still



very concerned about the development of the professional ministry within my annual conference. So I now turn to the general issue mentioned above through the particular context of the Mississippi Annual Conference.

In the first section of this study I will develop the problem for the reader as it has basically developed for me, only within a more organized framework, from my personal concern to the more general issue involved. Then in the next four sections, I want to probe this issue in the following ways: (chapter two) as we see ministers through the Christian tradition struggling with this same kind of problem in their own contexts; (three) as we see John Wesley confronting this same kind of concern as his ministry developed in the Church of England; (four) through researching some of the literature in regard to why ministers are leaving their profession, in order to discover possible hints that might enlighten us with this particular issue; and (five) to search my own theology of ministry in order to see if it can help me deal with my relationship to the annual conference.

Finally, I want this to be a constructive study which doesn't blow a lot of steam to deliver my soul through some academic experience of catharsis, but which (1) enables others to look into my reflection and encourages them to reflect concerning their own situations, and (2) makes some concrete suggestions to the seminary students, the Mississippi Annual Conference, and the United

Methodist Church, concerning the relationship of the institutions to its professional ministers - to its young ministers in particular.

I utilized only one methodological tool in this study: a fairly lengthy questionnaire. It was a multiple-choice questionnaire (Appendix I) administered through the mail to three groups of ministers. (1) Those who are members in full connection with the Mississippi Annual Conference and are not retired received questionnaires. The questionnaire was not sent to any ministers on leave or to those whom I was unable to locate. Of the 301 persons (Using statistics from the 1975 Annual Conference) in full connection who are not retired, I could not locate - either through insufficient addresses or recent moves - twelve ministers. Therefore, 289 questionnaires were mailed. Of these mailed, 123 were returned, or 42.6%; of the total number of ministers in full connection, then, 40.9% were returned. (2) Those ordained ministers who have transferred from the conference in the past twenty years also received questionnaires. The instrument was basically similar, but some items varied to fit their situation, and some items were added (see Appendix I). This research was complicated by the fact that no official list has been maintained by the Conference of all the ministers who have left. Some Conference officers supplied me with a partial list constructed from their memory; other names were added as I consulted the previous Conference Journals. I was

unable to obtain copies of the previous minutes of the conferences within the Former Central Jurisdictional Conference, and had to rely upon one of its former officials to reconstruct as best as possible a list of the black ministers who have left the Mississippi Annual Conference since 1955.

Of the total number of ministers on all the lists, five have returned to resume pastorates within the Conference, making a total then of 160 who have left. Of this number, 13 ministers are now serving in the North Mississippi Conference (8.1%T); I could not locate 22 ministers (13.8%T); 29 ministers were not in the parish (18.1%T); 9 ministers were retired (5.6%T); 3 ministers were granted disability leave (1.9%T); and 3 ministers were supernumerary (1.9%T).

I did not send questionnaires to those I could not locate nor to those who were retired. Because of problems in mailing and other factors, five other questionnaires were never sent. Therefore, a total of 124 questionnaires were mailed to this group who left, of which 52 questionnaires were returned (41.9%), accounting for 32.6% of the total 160 ministers who have left.

(3) The third group of questionnaires was sent to the seminary students from the Mississippi Annual Conference who already have some kind of connection with the Conference. Of the 23 seminary students registered in the minutes of the 1975 Conference, questionnaires were

sent to 21; I could not locate two students. Of the 21, 11 responded (52.4%), including my own response.

These questionnaires were not perfect instruments. The most serious flaw was the lack of parallel choices in the multiple-choice items. For the ministers who left, there was considerable ambiguity in sections three and four of their questionnaire as to which state and annual conference I had in mind - the one they were presently serving or the Mississippi Conference. Most of the respondents discovered that I intended for their new state and annual conference to be considered while answering the questions. Also, in the case of each question, I tried to encourage ministers to write in their own answers if the multiple-choice items did not in some way express their concerns.

My use of these questionnaires is intended only for descriptive purposes, and not to prove anything. In reading the first chapter, one must bear in mind that the statistics will only more or less reflect the opinions and attitudes of the ministers.

One intent of the questionnaire was to bring some of the issues out into the open, so that conference members might have the opportunity to reflect upon some matters which are not always openly discussed. I wanted everyone to have a share in correcting some of my own impressions.

To indicate the interest of the ministers in a

followup to the questionnaire, of those ministers who returned the questionnaire from outside the Conference, 40.4% said that they desired to expand their reflection in this manner. Of those who are members of the Mississippi Conference who returned questionnaires, 30.1% wanted to have this opportunity. Minister's written comments on the questionnaires are typed from the originals (to assure anonymity) and available upon request from the researcher. Statistical data for the questionnaires are given in Appendix II.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge several groups and persons who helped me in this project. First, the ministers who took the time to respond through the questionnaire have, in a sense, written the first chapter for me. They cut through many of my prejudices and straightened out my knowledge about the Annual Conference of which I am a member. Although the percentage of responses may not be high enough to validate scientifically my remarks, I think that it is remarkable that these many ministers, who are often flooded with questionnaires of all sorts, would take this time to help me and to them I am very grateful.

Secondly, I want to thank Rev. Robert Matheny for his help in getting me started with the process of locating these ministers who have left the Conference. I also wish to thank the annual conference secretaries of the annual conferences into which our ministers transferred for their help in locating more sufficient mailing addresses. Also,

thanks go to Dr. Ronald Osborn and Dr. Harvey Seifert for their time and advice through the entire journey of this project.

Thirdly, the inspiration of my parents and their dedication to the United Methodist Church of Mississippi has instilled in me an eagerness to be a servant to the United Methodist Church, as a branch of our Lord's Church; they have also taught me in many ways the fine line between good, responsible faith and shallow, passive acceptance. Likewise my older brother, Ivan, one of the many who chose to leave the Conference and the state, has all along my life been a model of faithful ministry and a source of inspiration; many of the issues which I raise actually originated through his own reflections. I also warmly want to thank my wife's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Clegg, who have given my wife and me so much of their encouragement and support.

Most of all, I thank Susan for all that she has done, and for the most precious gift which one person can give to another - her energy and time in supporting love.

## CHAPTER 1

## DEFINITION AND ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM

## THE PROBLEM BEFORE US

In the preface to this study I remarked that I must decide whether to return to the Mississippi Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church in order to serve in ministry. This paper is a working out of that decision. Before I dig at the roots of the problem before us, I believe that we must discover this Conference anew. What is it like and what makes it tick? What is it about the Conference or the state that would make me hesitate to assume my role in its ministry? And why have so many other ministers from that Conference raised the same question, and very often answered it negatively: "No, I will not return to the Mississippi Annual Conference."

First I will demonstrate in this chapter why this is not simply my personal problem, but is a real challenge for the entire Conference. I will be raising the daring yet necessary question, "Why did so many ministers leave during the last twenty years?"

After considering the tremendous breadth of this systemic issue, I will then refocus our attention upon, and explore in some depth, the cultural and structural setting of the problem in relationship to the Mississippi Annual Conference and its ministry.

Finally, I wish to locate the central issue which could provide a focus for further thought and study, whose resolution would involve both my personal problem and the broader issue of the "Methodist ministerial diaspora" in Mississippi. I agree with C. Wright Mills over and over again, in that what America needs is to understand personal troubles in relation to social issues, and likewise to translate social issues about which we all hear so much back into personal troubles.<sup>1</sup> What he says is intensely theological. We are all persons with our particular pressures, concerns, and thorns, yet we are all part of a social whole which produces issues and strains that affect us all as persons.

Here I plan to demonstrate then that my personal problem is a social issue, and that the social issue affects the personal ministries of all the members of the Mississippi Annual Conference and therefore the ministry of the United Methodist Church in Mississippi.

#### *Current Seminary Students*

Whether or not to return to the Mississippi Annual Conference has been a burning personal problem for many of the current seminary students from that Conference. Yet it has usually been assumed by the Conference that its young associates currently in seminary would plan to return to the state to serve in their ministry. We have been told by the Board of Ministry and other officials

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<sup>1</sup>C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 187.



that we could go anywhere for our seminary training, but that we should plan to return "home" to that Conference when we finished.

Yet four out of eleven seminary students replying to the questionnaire, or 36.4%,<sup>2</sup> said that they had "thoughtfully considered" changing their annual conference membership. Another three had "not seriously considered" such a move. Only four had never thought about the possibility. Also, of the ten responding, four students said that they planned to postpone their return by attending graduate school immediately after seminary, while six students said that they would like to return to graduate school to work further in the next few years. No students indicated that they did not have plans to go beyond this basic seminary degree!

*Recent Young Ministers Who Have Left the Conference*

Some of these students seem to be wondering whether they will have any peer support. Several of the brightest young ministers to return to the Conference in 1974 asked for transfers by the end of their first year, and at least one to date has been granted that transfer. They talked a great deal about the "political situation" of the Conference and the lack of peer support, both of

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<sup>2</sup>Percentages throughout will be given of those who responded to the questionnaire in each group.

which I shall discuss at length. One young minister who recently left wrote pages to me detailing the many issues he faced, then said that the primary reason he transferred was "because (he) could neither find leadership nor grow into authentic leadership in the Mississippi Conference." Some seminary students are talking to these persons in order to find out what the problems are within the Conference and what made them leave.

*Many Ministers Who Have Left the Conference: 1955-1974*

During the 1960's many Methodist ministers left the state and transferred into other Methodist conferences across the United States. Most of these ministers did not leave the ministry; only 18% are not in the parish, but in another branch of the church or in teaching.

The most well-known group to leave were the twenty-eight ministers who signed a petition saying that they would remain within the Methodist Church even if they had to leave the state to do it. The issue at the time was primarily in regard to the racial problems of the state; but when many of those ministers left, there were other issues involved. No conclusive study has been done about this group and their proclamation, but it is evident from their testimonies that personal, ethical, political and other factors have been decisive in their decision to leave the Conference. After 1965 only three of the original

twenty-eight ministers remained in the Conference.

Stories kept circulating around Mississippi circles about the great number of ministers who have left in the past twenty years or so, but no one has really kept up with the outflow. I was surprised to discover that, in the last twenty years, 160 ministers have transferred out of the Conference. Since there are about 300 ministers in the Mississippi Conference in full connection, those who have left make up about 35% of what would have been the total number of potential ministers. This is especially disturbing for the ministry of the Conference when we discover that the largest age group of those who left is 40-49, constituting 42.3%. The largest age group in the Conference is 50-59, with 26% of the ministers in that group. Only 24.4% of the Conference respondents fall into the 40-49 age group. Those who left represent a significant gap in the ages of the Mississippi ministers, and I think that we could find a concurrent gap in the Conference leadership.

These ministers who left are not only found in neighboring conferences: Louisiana, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Tennessee. One of the largest groups moved west to the Southern California-Arizona Conference. Many ministers serve as professors and on the staffs of professional schools and colleges. Others serve in administrative boards and agencies of the United Methodist Church;

still others are armed forces chaplains, or serve as chaplains and counselors in other institutions.

*Consequences of Ministers Who Continue To Leave*

The recent departures of several young ministers, and the continuing questioning among the Conference seminary students, may continue Mississippi Methodism in the predicament of not having enough seminary-trained ministers to fill the available positions. A glance at the appointments in the Conference journal evidence that many churches will not have trained clergy as pastors. There do not even seem to be enough associate and lay pastors to meet the needs. Many positions still have the "to be filled" indication.

I have reason to believe that if young ministers, especially the more talented ones, continue to leave in large percentages each year, soon United Methodism will no longer be a responsible denominational alternative in the south half of Mississippi. This Conference was warned through a survey conducted in 1963 that

Unless the conference carefully plans for its future ministerial needs and actively participates in recruiting young ministers it may in the future find itself in a situation in which it can no longer meet the demand for full conference members.

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<sup>3</sup>Alan K. Waltz, *A Survey of Selected Characteristics of Methodist Ministers, Lay Leaders, and Churches, 1963: The Mississippi Annual Conference, Southeastern Jurisdiction* (Philadelphia: Division of National Missions of

Again, in conclusion this survey stated:

If, for a variety of reasons, a situation should develop in which a large number of men transferred out of the conference, it could find itself in the position of not having a sufficient number of fully trained ministers to fill its pulpits.<sup>4</sup>

The situations referred to in these reports of 1963 have occurred, yet little has been done to examine the problem. The loss of leadership and ministers in general has been severe, yet it still has not been recognized within the Conference by either the laity or the executives. While ministers leave the Conference, leaders continued to cover up the problem and assume that its young crop of seminary students, which the Conference seems to have a talent for turning out year after year, will fulfill the needs. Yet more and more the seminary students are not thinking of their calling only in reference to the state. This then presents a personal problem for the seminary students, and it places a great burden upon the Conference to deal with the problem of the retention of its professional ministers.

*The Challenge Eefore Us*

The seminary student needs carefully to make a

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the Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1963), p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

responsible decision, in keeping with his concept of ministry, concerning his/her return to the Mississippi Annual Conference following his/her graduation. Not to consider his call apart from his home state may be to discount the possibility of fulfilling his talents before God. Yet what is the place of his home conference in his call to the ministry? How does he stand before this particular institution as a minister set apart by God for the Gospel?

The Mississippi Annual Conference must come to terms with its inability to sustain a constant source of well-trained persons for the ministry of its area. Why do its ministers sometimes decide to leave it for other fields? Is it really the "better opportunities for salaries and advancement" which is often given as an excuse for their loss, or is it something central to the ministry of the Mississippi Conference itself? The Conference needs to look at itself closely as an institution before God.

Finally, the United Methodist Church needs to look at its structures as a whole, to see whether it contributes to this kind of problem.

#### BOUNDARIES OF THE PROBLEM

##### *Broadening the Issue*

It is important from the beginning that we demonstrate the complexity of the problem at hand. Ministers have made their decisions to leave the Mississippi

Conference for many different reasons. 51% of the ministers said that they left the Conference because of dirty politics within the Conference structure. Yet many of these same persons also suggested other reasons, with 38.5% of the ministers saying that there were clear ethical and social issues involved in their decision and 34.6% saying that personal reasons were involved. Those who sent letters concerning their reasons usually attempted to stress one basic overriding issue, but still waded through a variety of issues and problems which they considered when they left. "Poor leadership" was most often penciled into the multiple-choice blank as a reason for leaving; but other reasons nearly always dealt to some extent with Mississippi itself, apart from the Conference.

When a seminary student ponders this question, all kinds of reasons are set forth for returning to the state:

- (1) "this is where you were raised" or "this is your home;"
- (2) "this is where all your folks live;" (3) "this is where all your friends in the ministry are located;" (4) "we need good young ministers like yourself;" (5) "we have a very good appointment waiting for you;" and (6) "our standard of living is lower here, and life is so much easier going; the people are good, church-going believers."

How does the seminary student, in making a decision whether to return to the Conference, even begin to make sense of this quasi-ethical smorgasbord of opinions and

directives? What factors will he or she consider? Will he think first of the fact that he was born in the state, and that his family obligations demand that he be nearby? If he is married will he think of his own family? Will finances and mental health determine how far away from "home" one might transfer?

Will he think about economics - about standards of living, salaries and the price of opera tickets? Or is a concern for such worldly matters a disgrace to the call to be in ministry, to be a servant of Christ and to walk in his place?

Should one be concerned about the persons with whom one will be serving in ministry - the peer group of professionals with whom one will be consulting, staffing together, or relaxing together at a retreat? Is my ministry an individual call to be in service to the world before God, or does my call involve being a part of a group of persons set apart for the special tasks of the church? Is it immoral to reject one group for another group with whom I might spend the rest of my life in ministry? How strong are the ethical obligations to return to a particular institution into which one was born and raised, particularly in a day when everyone seems to be on the move anyway?

Is the appropriate Christian response to return to the place from which one came and probably knows best, in order to serve as prophet and priest to persons who need



the Gospel of Jesus Christ just as much as persons of any other place?

It is important also to discover whether this kind of questioning is going on among seminary students from other conferences in the United Methodist Church. In other words, is this a problem for Methodism as a whole, or only for the Mississippi Annual Conference? Does this kind of movement, if it is national, simply reflect the mobile environment in which we live, or is there something problematical about the particular Conference being affected by the transfers?

For example, consider three small towns which have five grocery stores each. One grocery store in which I am the personnel manager is having trouble keeping its employees; they seem to be transferring to other grocery stores in my town and other towns. Would I be correct to say that there is something wrong with the way in which my store handles its employees? Perhaps. But it also may be appropriate to research and possibly discover that all of the grocery stores in my town are losing their employees to stores in other towns. If this is so, then it may be that there is something wrong with the town. To get at this problem I may have to take a poll of the stores in my town in order to find whether the same phenomenon is occurring. But I would also have to take a poll of the grocery stores in the several towns, for it may be a problem of the entire

area and not simply of my town. Then again, if this were to be the case, I would need a greater perspective by researching all the grocery stores in this region, or in the country. If the phenomenon is nation-wide, then I would have to consider the possibility that persons may be disgruntled with the form of the grocery story in general, and that case my store would be no different from the entire country. The paradigm raises many questions. Is this a decision being faced only by United Methodist seminary students? Ministers of the congregational system, and to a great extent of the presbyterial system, move all over the United States. They would have to make this decision many times in their careers. The United Methodists generally assume that once one is accepted into an Annual Conference, he is a member of that Conference for life. This particular choice of a lifetime location is unique among those ministers under an episcopal appointment system.

Another set of questions concern the cultural and social factors related to the shortage of ministers. Is this a problem only for the Conference, or does it have its genesis in the culture of Mississippi itself, of which that Conference is necessarily a participant: It will be important to look at the changing social patterns and value systems of the culture as well as of the problems associated with that particular Conference.

*Narrowing the Issue*

I am investigating a particular situation which happens to be a concern for my own ministry. Therefore, the information in the following chapter will deal only with the Mississippi Annual Conference in its particular social setting. I will be attempting to narrow these questions into one central focus. But I hope that by expanding the boundaries as I have, many of the questions (which I have heard raised all my life) will be openly before us, hopefully some other students, seeking answers to similar questions, may be challenged to work with these issues in light of their own expectations in ministry.

*To the Mississippi Conference.* Certain questions I will not be attempting to answer. First, I will not try to decide whether the other conferences in United Methodism are having a problem with the retention of its professional ministers. Evidence indicates that most conferences, except for those on the east and west coasts, are still looking for ministers each year to fill their vacancies. I think that it could be successfully documented, however, that the Mississippi Conference, of all those located in the United States, has the most appointments either vacant or filled by clergypersons and/or laypersons who are not in full connection (seminary-trained) with the

Conference.

*To Mississippi.* I will not try to do a sociological analysis of the United States to aid us in this particular problem. While factors such as mass mobility, restlessness, and anomie are existent beyond Mississippi, I will confine my analysis to the Mississippi social setting, and will speak only to those factors which I see as bearing on the issue at hand.

*To United Methodism.* I will not attempt to deal with other denominations. United Methodism has a unique connectional appointment system and, with its history, has a variant theological emphasis in regard to the relationship of the minister and the institution to which he belongs as a member.

## CHAPTER 2

## THE CENTRAL PROBLEM OF THE MISSISSIPPI CONFERENCE

## CULTURAL FACTORS AND SOCIAL STRUCTURES

*Tradition*

Tradition is an ambiguous word. It is the catch-all that youth use when they describe what they do not like about their elder's habits. It is the idea to which we appeal when the things we admire most about our culture are being denigrated. "Tradition" is also the center of our enthusiasm when we uncover our folk heritage and assign it positive value. In Mississippi, tradition can mean all of these things and more.

Mississippi is mostly a rural state, where continuity of existence is most apparent and generally most prized. Even the larger towns and small cities have a farmtown atmosphere, and exhibit the characteristics of smaller communities. There is very little communication between these small cities, except through the radio and television.

Mississippi lacks a large urban center. The state capital is the closest to an urban center, but its population is still below two hundred thousand, and it evidences many of the characteristics of the small town. This means that there is no "public sector" in which

in which diverse lifestyles and unexpected movements can be accepted and fostered. The small town milieu of both social rivalry or separation and the pressure to conform permeates the state.

The state press is one great reservoir of the traditional southern way of life. It is timid and incompetent in most of its cities. Many of the local newspapers are controlled by one Jackson family, while Meridian and other cities also have grossly conservative editors. Only the Carter family of Greenville contributes in a major way to more open and honest press. One young minister who recently left the ministry in Mississippi said:

Many penetrating issues affecting Mississippi are rarely exposed through the press. Also, one has to read out-of-state paper to read influential national columnists. Paul Harvey is omnipresent. His opinions being in the newspapers, on radio, and on television makes him the No. 1 philosopher in the state! In other words, people used to the exchange of ideas might find Mississippi disappointing.

I would add that the Hunt "Voice of America" broadcasts and the Gospel of Garner Ted Armstrong run close seconds to Mr. Harvey in popular philosophy.

This appeal to tradition takes the form of the assumptions which one has encountered around oneself during a lifetime, and not a rigorous and objective evaluation of the traditions of particular institutions in which one is involved. For instance, the tradition of Sunday School is very important in the local church, and could

not be uprooted with a bulldozer. It is valued because one was brought up in the system; and because of the reverence one has for one's parents, it is automatically validated as a necessary experience. It is not valued because it is always a particularly exciting or helpful weekly activity, or because one knows the real tradition of the Sunday School, how it got its start and why it is important. The question of "why" is rarely taken to heart; the usual answer is "because that's the way it should be done."

There is a rising interest by Mississippians in the historical and folk traditions of the state, due to extensive work and research by the state historians in Jackson. As an important dimension of social meaning this is a commendable trend. But it is only a small group, mostly in the largest city, which has become interested in the traditions of all the people.

In general, Mississippi is still rural, rigidly conservative, and oblivious to national issues. It serves as a place of security and retreat from a complex world. Eighty-seven percent of the ministers there said that they felt at home in Mississippi. A "sense of place," tied in with the need for good land, is very important to the Mississippian. Interestingly, the ministers who left the state virtually agreed (90%) that they felt at home in their new conferences. But in Mississippi this feeling of "homeness" seems to breed a certain kind of regionalism and ethnocentrism which is more interested in conformity than in

diversity, more interested in continuity than in creativity. The social institution and structures, the clubs and civic organizations encourage and perpetuate these attitudes and beliefs.

### *Family*

The extended family is still very important in Mississippi, although I feel that its significance is dwindling rapidly. Given two generations, it may not be nearly so influential. Mississippi ministers overwhelmingly said that, beyond their own nuclear family, they had family concerns here in the state (79.7%). Of those ministers who left the state however, only 38.5% could affirm that they had family concerns in the new situations. This breakup of the extended family by their mobility has been a source of anxiety for some of the ministers. Closeness of relatives for Mississippians has been an important context of psychic health. The family is counted upon for help in difficult situations and for counsel in important decisions. Lay, medical and clerical institutions are generally available, especially near the towns, but for in-depth encounter and emergency needs the family provides the main source of attention and psychic nourishment.

Friendships are also very important, and greatly depend upon proximity. Ninety percent of the Mississippi ministers said that their friends were in that state. Of those who left, 88.5% said that their friends were also



nearby. They did not leave all their friends back in the state, but formed new friendships in their new appointments.

It would seem that the ministers who left would have some difficulty in dealing with (1) unfamiliar social and institutional structures, and (2) quite different cultural lifestyles. Yet from the ministers who responded we learn that 84.6% found both adjustments quite simple to make.

For the minister who has attended seminary away from the state, his experience away more than likely only substantiated many of the attitudes and beliefs which he formed through his family. Seminary can easily be three protected years in regional thought patterns which are never unwrapped. Once the student returns home and establishes himself in his mental territory along with many like-minded ministers, he will not allow others to enter his territory, especially if they have a background diverse in attitudes and beliefs from his extended family.

#### *Economy*

One unfortunate aspect of Mississippi's rural existence has been the misuse of the natural landscape. The delta region is being drained with very few controls, except for some governmental programs which are pouring huge sums of money into the hands of the very rich. The pine trees in the south are being cut extensively with few

serious attempts to sustain growth. The business and agricultural magnates have exploited the land and even the small landowners have not always tried to conserve their share.

Mississippi has begun to come out of its economic shell through the work of some new aggressive governmental leadership and the state's own think-tank known as Research and Development Center. Some of the trends encouraged by the Center, however, have been fought by the big businesses with the result that the funding for the Center has constantly been under debate.

Mississippi ministers generally agreed that the standard of living is lower for their state than for other parts of the country, particularly in regard to clothing and housing. Food costs are slightly lower than other areas, but basically about the same. Those ministers who left Mississippi felt that their food, clothing and housing costs were generally higher than other parts of the country, wherever they happened to be located.

For the individualist concerned about his own pocketbook, Mississippi is a good place to live economically. For those concerned about trends and economic growth and development, there is much work to be done.

### *Ethnic Relations*

Ethnic relations are supposedly better in Mississippi

than they have ever been. There is a note of reserve here, for no one really seems to know at this time. There is a kind of unethical "tolerance" permeating the state, which loosely translated means "I will put up with you because the laws of my country tell me to, and it is probably best."

This is most evident in the Conference, which according to one observer "may have missed its best opportunity for racial harmony." The Conference officials of the former all-white conference attempted to re-establish segregated districts during the recent merger of the black and white conferences. This effort to prolong real harmony further demoralized the black community, which all along has given much more faith to the Mississippi Conference than it deserved. Black clergymen continue to struggle for conference positions, and have even won a few token elections at the 1975 meeting. Nevertheless, their rise in the structure seems to be a result of individualistic efforts. The remainder of the Black pastors serve on very low pay scales or subsistence pay, and the black lay persons are generally powerless and fearful.

#### *Cultural Values*

*Individualism versus Communalism.* Individualism is the central value for those who live in the state. Anything that is of significance to an individual will be

heard by that person only from one whom he has known and trusted. Social institutions are generally distrusted - the government, the institutions of the church, etc. Individuals are very careful with whom they form their close ties. Kinship and friendship ties form the agents of community action, communication and change. Changes circumventing these agents will meet with violent reaction or negligent apathy.

Persons are treated with central significance once they have made their worth known to you. Speaking theologically, "law" is generally more important in regard to the formation of close ties than "grace." Worth is determined by one's relationship to this extended family of kin and friend. Worth is also determined by how well one understands and accepts the traditional values and assumptions, and operates out of that context. Generally, individuals must first establish this worth before they are accepted, unless they are born into the kin group. Until then, their acceptance into a community will be artificial.

Individualism is revered although it is not always the practice. Communal association - both formal and informal - is acceptable if it espouses and participates in activity supportive of the traditional values. Those organizations holding different beliefs will be targeted as outcasts, or "communists." This is surprisingly true

to a degree within the Conference. Forty-two percent of the Mississippi ministers who responded said that they would rather be "individuals" in their ministry, and not part of a group ministry. Yet 77.2% said that they like the fellowship of its ministers. In a sense, it seems that this fellowship is a fellowship of individuals who share many ideas in common. Those ministers who left the Conference reported similar results, indicating that this is one value which has been carried with them to a great degree.

*Consensus versus Conflict.* These communal groups of "individuals" seek conformity to the traditional values and oppose other group formations which are going to challenge their values. They would hope that troublesome individuals would remain scattered rather than form into resistance groups. Fellowship is for those who conform to the important values and issues. Those who do not conform, since they are pressured to keep from forming caucuses and groups, will often feel alienated and separated.

Conflict is discouraged because it poses a threat to voluntary consensus and conformity. It is feared because it creates confusion in an otherwise accepted order. Those who create conflict by bringing festering problems to the surface are separated out from the political arena.

## THE MISSISSIPPI ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Small Church Appointments*

When I return to Mississippi I will probably be appointed to a small church, or circuit of churches in a rural setting. Of the Mississippi ministers responding to the questionnaire, 65% indicated that their first appointment out of school was into a circuit of more than one church in the countryside. Another 9.8% were appointed to a single, small country church. Only 8.1% were appointed as associates on a church staff, which is a traditional appointment for many ministers in urban conferences as they begin their ministry.

One minister who left the state in the 1960's had this to say:

In addition to that, the Mississippi hierarchy seemed unwilling to employ ministers in a rational manner. They allowed "churches" to remain at almost every burial plot long after schools, businesses, and farms had seen the necessity of consolidation. The Methodist leaders cried continuously about the shortage of ordained ministers. Yet they duplicated each minister's work by having congregations no more than two miles apart. Even that would not have been so bad had the members justified it. In some instances, ministers would have only twenty to twenty-five members per congregation. These members could easily have driven three miles down the road to church! They drive twenty to work!

This was well-documented in my research. Twenty-six percent of the ministers in the Conference said that there was at least one other Methodist church within one

mile of their own church! Another 36.6% said that there was another Methodist church within one to three miles of their congregations. In other words, well over half the Methodist churches in Mississippi are located within three miles of each other - in a state which has one of the lowest density rates in the United States!

One minister wrote:

One area of disturbing failure is the death of scores of rural churches during the past twenty years. To prevent it, the conference needed to enact innovative larger parish structures and make the leadership of such ministries attractive. No one noticed as the churches slipped into oblivion.

The Mississippi ministers characterized their current locations of ministry as being in small towns (53.7%) (I did not indicate what would be considered a small or large town, however.) Within a twenty mile radius, 82.7% of the ministers said that there was a radio station, but only 65% said that there was a local television station as well. Of the ministers who have left the state, 50% said that their current location of ministry was in a small town, while 40.4% said that their ministry was in a large town or city. This indicates a similarity in their subjective judgment about the size of the towns in which they all minister. Those who transferred also had access to nearby radio stations, and 76.9% said that there were television stations within twenty miles.

Doubtless many other annual conferences have many appointments in small communities. Seminary students,

however, are often working in large city churches and tend to forget that their forthcoming appointments may be in smaller settings. While two students reported that they have worked in smaller churches during their seminary training, the average church membership for these apprentices during seminary was 590! It may be a shock to leave a 250 member youth program in a two thousand member church and return to a church of eighty farmers and retired adults where the average age is sixty-two. Yet the Mississippi ministers indicated that their transition from seminary to their first appointment was generally smooth (56.1%); 26.8% said it was sometimes difficult.

These same ministers overwhelmingly said that if they could be appointed to the position they would most like, it would be to the small town main church (48.8%). The ministers who left generally disagreed. Forty-two percent said that they would rather be in a suburban church or a head minister of a large "first" church in a city.

Some ministers have said, "Small churches are as important for ministry as larger churches. Why do we have to neglect the small church?" The small congregation is indeed too often neglected, yet some of the most effective ministry takes place in the context of the small group. Even larger churches are finding that they have to break down into smaller units before their ministry to one another can be effective. Some persons advocate a return to the



circuit system, where one minister may be in charge of five or six "house" churches, even in the large cities.

Some other ministers suggest that nothing can ever be done in a very powerful and significant way with the small church. The ministry is too localized and has few contacts with the greater urban areas. Some other ministers see the small rural church as simply a "way-station" until they can advance through the system into the larger appointment closer to the cities.

Doubtless there are far too many churches for the number of Methodists and Methodist ministers in the area. The conference has innovated the concept of a "cluster" of churches in ministry together, which worked well in Vicksburg. But it has not been developed on a conference-wide basis, for various reasons which must become known.

Statistically, in south Mississippi the average United Methodist parish (i.e. the total number of members under one minister, which may be more than one congregation) membership is 549 among those who responded to the questionnaire. Twenty-six percent of the ministers, the largest group, had churches between 200 and 400 members. The second largest group had churches between 400 and 600 members. So the average parish for the fully ordained and connected minister is not exceedingly small.

*Economic Factors*

Only 5.5% of the Mississippi respondents had salaries below \$7,000. In fact, 84.5% of the ministers reported salaries between \$7,000 and \$16,000, with nearly half of those coming in the \$10,000 to \$13,000 range. While most of the ministers found their salaries to be adequate (66.7%), 24.4% felt their salaries were inadequate. Only 2.4% made the modest assertion that they were being overpaid.

It is difficult to compare these with those ministers who left. So many of these other ministers are in teaching posts and positions which pay considerably higher. No minister who left the Mississippi Conference is receiving less than \$5,000 in salary. Two percent were receiving less than \$7,000. Most of the ministers were receiving from \$7,000 to \$20,000, with 15.4% receiving salaries in excess of \$20,000. So their salaries were, as to be expected, somewhat higher. Yet they expressed the adequacy/inadequacy of their salaries in similar ratios.

The churches' budgets in the Conference are financed by professionals (doctors, teachers, etc.) and white collar business persons. This indicates that the membership which makes the largest financial contributions are not the great landowners and growers, nor the farmers, as one might suspect in a rural state. Rather they are

the urban, white upper-middle class. People in farming make up about 25% of the contributions, while blue collar or clerical workers make about 22%.

In comparison, it is interesting to note that the professionals and the white collar business persons make up about 82.7% of the financial contributions of the churches of those ministers who left the state, while those engaged in rural or farming operations make up about 19.2%. The blue collar workers only contribute 11.5%. I think that it may have been assumed by some that Mississippi churches probably discourage the blue collar workers, while churches outside the state would be more open to the support of the blue collar worker. This may not necessarily be the case, however.

Another concern which should be mentioned here is the emphasis placed on the church building as the house of God. Because it is God's house, many persons feel that it is appropriate according to their beliefs to build the house as big as the support of the congregation will allow. Often it is so large that years are spent paying the debts on a building which has very little use beyond the church school and worship hours on Sunday. The function of the proposed building is a question rarely asked until the structure has been completed.

A phenomenal 23.6% of the Mississippi ministers who responded said that their churches were currently engaged in a building program, and another 43.9% said that

their churches were currently financing a building program, one either in the past or to be completed in the future. Only 17.9% said that they were not currently funding a building, and 16.3% said that they did not foresee one in the next ten years. It would be appropriate to question the priority of this use of the budget in light of needs and the moral governance of values.

This does not seem to be a problem only for the Mississippi ministry, however. Forty-eight percent of the ministers away indicated that they were engaged in financing a building program, while only 7.7% were not currently funding one. Either there is a terrific need for further building space, or else there are other problems in our understanding of the church and its ministry which we are not facing.

### *Family*

In a monolithic system change comes hard, especially if there is not consistent peer support for the change agents. The pressure for conformity defines the expectations for the family. The family is expected to be a single thinking, reflecting, and acting unit. Church participation is a family event, and no less is expected of the minister's family than of the minister.

This leads me to conclude that ministry, particularly in Mississippi, is a family occupation. Although the husband receives the credit, the obligations upon the

wife and children are no less direct. The family is expected not only to support the husband in his work, but to support the church. As the husband is the totally committed churchperson, so the family is married to the church.

Some recent ministers have tried to emphasize the privilege of the spouses to develop their lives as they desire in the context of the family life, and not with the obligation of church participation. But this runs counter to the social demands for conformity. The spouse who feels strongly about his or her own career away from the church institution will more than likely feel alienated from the church community.

This has its roots in early Methodism, where the minister rode the circuit alone (or with another minister) without his family. Sometimes the preacher would be gone for a month or more at a time. The wife had to look after the children by herself. This was the commitment she made to her marriage, knowing that she was making this sacrifice for the church. The times and the requirements for ministry have changed, but the mores for the parson's family lag far behind.

This happens also because the church is not only the source of income for the family, as a secular job might be. It is also a voluntary organization which demands total commitment from its members. The minister as the head of this voluntary organization is also its representative

figure. Because the role of persuasion is paramount to the success of the organization, the minister and his family serve as ideal types of what it means to be committed totally. Failure to live the given role means hypocrisy of the spoken Word, spoken through the conforming pressure of the necessity for persuasion.

The Mississippi ministers generally said (77.2%) that their families felt comfortable in their relationship to the church. Only 17.9% felt that their family was feeling some pressure. It was about the same in their new situations for those ministers who left. Because this could say two things, the most obvious being that the families are well-adjusted in the traditional expectations of the ministerial family. The other possible explanation could be that the ministers' wives, to a great extent, have accepted these traditional roles either willingly or with great tension which has been covered over. It is impossible to pinpoint from this question.

A clue might be given in the response to the question concerning the ministers' satisfactions which they considered important during their careers. The Mississippi ministers checked, in this order, "full use of their talents," "groups' support," and "church growth" before they said that their "family well-being and security" was important. The ministers who left the Conference checked "family well-being and security" only less often than they did "full use of my talents." Still it is merely a

conjecture, worth investigating, that there could be some conflict between the family and the growth of the church.

*Continuing Education and Availability of Resources*

Continuing education of the minister is an important individual and corporate endeavor, and is therefore both an individual and corporate responsibility. There must be some resources available to the ministers as well as some opportunities for personal growth both in the practical tools and in the reflective disciplines of ministry.

Most of the Mississippi ministers are at least satisfied with the Conference opportunities for continuing education, although nearly 30% of the ministers expressed dissatisfaction with the Conference's continuing education program. Of the ministers who left the state, only 3.8% are dissatisfied with their respective conferences' programs.

This high percentage of ministers within the state who are dissatisfied could reflect their high demands or their frustration in ministry, as well as a scarcity of opportunities. The Conference program has usually been relegated to a one week conference on the ministry. Regular sabbaticals for ministers are not encouraged. The nearest seminary is too far to make commuting for coursework a possibility.

Also, Conference speakers for major events involving

lay and clergy persons are usually selected for their popular appeal to the evangelical tastes of the laity. Tennessee Ernie Ford was invited to keynote a recent annual conference meeting; when he declined the invitation because the Conference could not pay the money which he requested, the Conference committee asked for a former Miss America. The many hundreds of persons in our Methodist theological faculties who could have provided some real insight as well as popular appeal were not considered; they rarely are.

Even more persons were dissatisfied with the Conference's availability of resources (31.7%), whereas again only 5.8% of the ministers who left expressed a similar dissatisfaction. Once again, there is no major seminary nearby which could provide a nucleus of reference material. Only the Millsaps College library has a collection of religious and Christian literature which could provide a starting point for reference work. Resources, in terms both of material and of authoritative persons, have to be shipped in from out of the state for most areas of study and work.

### *Patterns of Ministry*

It is important for the seminary student who will shortly be a part of a connectional fellowship to become acquainted with the ministry of those who make up the fellowship. What is the primary goal in ministry for the



ministers of the Mississippi Conference? How do they see these goals in relationship to the culture in which they live? What kinds of theological emphases sustain their ministry and provide a resource of meaning for their practices?

To get at this, I first asked the ministers to list in order what the most important functions have been in their ministry, and I gave them five fairly standard choices. Two functions in particular were lacking which I should have added: evangelism and Christian education. I think these two functions of ministry might have been considered important by many.

In the list, the overwhelming first choice of the Mississippi ministers and of those who left the Conference, along with the current seminary students, was "preaching and worship." The centrality of the spoken Word in the context of the worship service is well-established and still strong among Methodist ministers.

Clearly the second, third, fourth and fifth choices of the Mississippi and the seminary students were, respectively, visiting and counseling (60.7%), church administration (61.2%), community action (40.8%), and church building and construction (55.9%). Yet there are a few interesting facts: (1) For their first choice, nearly ten percent of the ministers checked "church building and construction" as being the priority item during their career in the ministry. (2) Church administration clearly ranked higher

than community action and involvement. (3) More people wrote in "education" than checked "community action" as their first choice.

For the ministers who left the state, the interests were about the same, except that the interests in church building and construction was ranked fourth and community action and involvement came in fifth. This is interesting in light of the fact that many of these ministers were thought to have left directly because of their community activity concerning public issues. None of the ministers who left, however, said that "church building" was first or second in their list of functions.

Both groups of ministers said that their concepts and practices of ministry had gradually grown, while very few said that their concepts had changed drastically or stayed about the same. About twice as many (in percent) of the ministers who left the state said that their concept of ministry had remained about the same, while more Mississippi ministers said that their concept had "changed drastically."

It is difficult to investigate how the ministers feel that their values relate to the values of the milieu in which they live. Since most ministers would consider their values to be related as much as possible to those of the Christian tradition, whatever that subjectively might be, I asked them how those Christian values relate to the

cultural values which find in Mississippi.

The Mississippi ministers and those who left said in general that these values were "sometimes in tension." While 5.8% of those ministers who left said that they were in direct conflict 21.1% of the Mississippi ministers said that the values of the Christian tradition were in general agreement with the values of the Mississippi culture. Likewise, only 6.5% of the Mississippi ministers said that these values were in direct conflict, a harsh way of conceiving the social situation; yet 23.1% of the ministers who left said that this direct conflict existed.

Most of the ministers belong to either a service club or a community improvement agency, although more of the ministers who left belong to such improvement associations or agencies. Nearly every minister indicated some kind of involvement in community life.

Now I asked the ministers to indicate what theologians had influenced them the most during their careers. They could check two, although some chose to check more than two and some others checked only one or none.

Both groups of ministers were influenced more by Harry Emerson Fosdick than any other person listed, indicating the importance of their involvement in the preaching ministry. Paul Tillich was second among both groups, indicating his prominence as a theologian when many of these ministers were in theological school. Third, again for both groups, was Clovis Chappell, evangelist and preacher

from the southern part of the country.

Then the similarity breaks down. The Mississippi ministers rank next in importance Billy Graham and Karl Barth, while the ministers who left list Billy Graham and Reinhold Niebuhr. For the Mississippi ministers Reinhold Niebuhr ranks well below Billy Graham and Dwight L. Moody, while he ranks just below Graham, but well above Moody for the ministers who left.

Of the current seminary students, Billy Graham was the overwhelming first choice as being most influential (36.4%). Tillich, Keith Miller, Reinhold Niebuhr, Moody and Whitehead received two votes each, while all the others (except for Harvey Cox who received none) received one vote.

All of this seems to indicate that theology has little to do with whether a minister left or remained within the Conference. In fact, there is much that could be done here, in the way of controlling for this theological variable while seeing if the "influential theologians" had an impact on how the ministers answered the other questions.

Although the Conference initiated the use of a cluster concept for its county churches, in general the Conference lacks the flexibility in leadership to initiate such new opportunities for ministry, especially via the old downtown churches and also through creative, new relationships between town churches and surrounding circuits. This lack of interest in creating new ministries cannot be attributed to some of the lay persons alone, but

also to many of the ministers. One person who left both the Mississippi Conference and later the North Mississippi Conference, had this to say about the latter (although I think he certainly would have applied it to the Mississippi Conference as well):

In my first church, realizing that one could not enroll people . . . (in an) educational class until after they joined the Church I sought to insist on membership training prior to their joining. I finally got this tradition half-way established in the congregation. When I was transferred to another congregation, the Mississippi minister who followed me, who was non-seminary trained, immediately reversed the procedure that it had taken me a year to establish.

Furthermore during my first year, I worked toward a sense of order in worship. This, too, my relief quickly reduced to 'three hymns and a prayer.' I left the North Mississippi Annual Conference because I decided that I did not want to spend the rest of my ministry with colleagues who were untrained and whose lack of training caused them to undo the work that I had done. For me not only was my time at stake. The very nature of the church and what it is about was at stake.

#### *Patterns of Influence and Leadership*

This brings us to a sixth area of investigation. I think we can begin to get at the root of the issue by providing some lengthy excerpts from the letter of another minister who left the Mississippi Conference:

I left Mississippi because I could neither find leadership nor grow into authentic leadership in the Mississippi Conference . . . The conference is dying because of a lack of aggressive leadership. One former conference official tells me that the conference program comes in about a four-year cycle with the same people dishing up the same inadequate ideas every year. Watch for a "year of evangelism" (the N.Ms. program this year) and a version of "operation church school" (the Ms. program this year) during the next several years!

. . . The conference suffers from a lack of models of leadership for younger clergy. Many appear to be motivated by desire for status and creature comforts, to such a degree that "ministry" has lost its meaning. Others, opposing the ineptness of these leaders, have become jaded by their own cynicism and protest . . . Why is the conference so depressed? I think the primary reason is the presence of an effective "political machine". A group of men have had the cleverness to join together to control elections, gradually to gain power in the Cabinet and many boards, and even to use their power against their "opponents". Whenever such a group exists, it develops the worst features of a minister's life, and it habitually invests power into the hands of incompetent persons susceptible to control by the "machine". The end result is that the conference lacks capable, creative leadership on all levels; ministers exist in a state of continual warfare; and the perspective of ministry to the whole area is lost by all concerned. . .

. . . The loss of new leadership (must become) so severe that it has to be recognized within and outside the Jackson Area by both laity and executives. Then and only then can the support be gathered for reform and new opportunities for authentic ministry.

This is how one of the ministers who left the Conference saw its leadership situation; others have shared similar stories. But do they feel this way because they left the Conference? What do the ministers within the Conference feel about their leadership?

Fifty-four percent of the ministers said that they felt the leadership is average, neither solid and sound, nor weak and ineffective. Only 9.8% said that the leadership is solid and sound, while 27.6% said that the leadership is weak and ineffective.

An exceptionally large group apparently is displeased with the leadership, and it seems as though it should provide the nucleus for change. On the other

hand, 55.3% of the ministers said that they had received support from the Conference leadership, while only 25.2% said that they had received "neither help nor hindrance." Yet 15.4% said that they would be threatened with an appointment change if they were to take an unpopular position in the Conference.

It seems then that for many ministers, the leadership is either supportive or apathetic. Yet while small in number, the group which feels uneasy in their relationship to the leadership is still a significant proportion of ministers.

#### *Political Structure and Conference Issues*

There is sometimes expressed the feeling, as witnessed in the previous letter, that Conference issues are controlled by a small group which holds the political power, usually translated as the power to control the votes. Among these full-time Conference members who responded, only 7.3% said that this power was concentrated in the hands of one or two persons; yet 41.5% said that this power was located in the hands of three to nine persons. Thirty-nine percent said that the power was dispersed among ten or more persons.

Fifty-three percent said that the bishop was part of this "power group," while 27.6% said that he was not a part of the power. It is fair to say, at this point, that some of the ministers think that there is a concentration

of political power which some persons share more than others.

The most serious problem seems to be in regard to issues which come before the Conference. 63.4% of the ministers said that issues were often covered up, in one way or another, so that they did not receive full and open exploration before the Conference. Only 30.9% said that such issues were explored fully and out in the open. The seminary group responded similarly.

The questionnaire does not tell us what issues are being covered up, nor who is doing the covering. But the problem seems to be a crucial one for the majority of the respondents. Once again, that small minority (14.6%) said that they had suffered acts of reprisal by conference leaders for unpopular stands which they had taken during their careers.

In regard to appointments, the same number of persons (14.6%) said that they had not been treated fairly. It could be that these ministers are unhappy with the leadership because they felt that they were treated unfairly in regard to appointments. They may have projected the blame for their own inadequacy. It also could be that they were treated unfairly because they took unpopular positions and antagonized their leadership. The cause and effect here obviously needs more careful attention.

This small group is supported in their problems with the appointment system by others (39%) who said that the bishop (and his cabinet) and themselves have entirely



different criteria for appointments. Only 30.1% said that they shared the same criteria. This question was a "forced choice" which accounts for the high percentage (30.9%) who chose not to answer the question.

The seminary students, indicating a desire to participate in the appointment process, said (64%) that they would like to have a major role in working out their first appointments. None said that it was their "duty to go where assigned," regardless of their own designs and talents.

#### *Peer Support*

If effective change is to occur in the Mississippi Conference, or in any institution which has entrenched traditions, the change agents must have some degree of mutual peer support. As one minister who left the state said, individuals may remain in Mississippi to minister, provided that they possess several things, one of which is a disciplined support group of ministers dedicated to personal growth and learning. Such a group could not be successful if it becomes as most do a "gripe" group or a power group. The minister goes on to say that he could not find a group with the necessary discipline.

The Mississippi ministers said (77.2%) that they "like the fellowship" of the ministers of the Conference, and from their peers they said (82.1%) that they had a supportive relationship. Once again, it was a small

minority group (12.2% and 13.9%) who expressed an alienation from this fellowship. Either they felt all alone (10.6%) or they felt that they have a negative and/or hostile relationship with their peers.

Is this small group a troublemaking collectivity which the Conference ought to ignore? Should the Conference charge the group to straighten itself out in conformity to the rest of the fellowship or step out? What is the relationship of these ministers to the Conference (the larger fellowship) and to one another? Must one remain isolated, or become "part of the team" and its values and interests? Is this the only choice? What, of all of this, do the seminary students consider as they decide to return to their Conference?

#### FINDING THE CENTRAL FOCUS

Obviously the Mississippi ministers in general have much more faith in the Conference than have those ministers who left. But what is the nature of their faith, and what is the nature of those who "breached" their faith? And why is there a continuing group of ministers within the Conference who do not feel a part of the mainstream of the Conference structure and fellowship?

#### *The Wrong Issues*

Here I want to list some things which I think are not at issue, in an attempt to clear the air. Then I will

discuss what I think are peripheral issues leading up to the key issue.

1. The key problem is not the culture in which the Conference has its ministry. Surely the context of this ministry is unique, and has its own history of events with which it must contend and particular values and norms to which it must address its Gospel.

Some of the ministers left because there was a particular event which proved too much for them, or because there was a particular social norm or ethical issue with which they could not cope through their ministry. But for most ministers there were other, more far-reaching issues involving their relationship to the other ministers in the Conference.

2. The issue is not the racial "problem." The group which left during the 1960's did not all leave because of the racial tension and the tension in their churches. This was a catalyst for some, but most who left deny that this was the clearcut problem. Indeed, most of the ministers indicate that they did not enjoy leaving at this particular time because of the important social changes which were occurring in their towns.

3. The issue is not a problem of low salaries or lack of opportunities for advancement and good appointments. The salaries are not that much lower today than in other annual conferences, given the standard of living. (Black ministers generally have a lower salary due to the economic

range of their church members, but it is not the black ministers per se who have left the Conference in such numbers.) Many local churches, especially white churches, emphasize the salary of the minister in proportion to the size of the budget of the church.

4. The issue is not the "rural life" of the churches. Many of the ministers who left indicated that they would really like to be ministers in small towns. Not all ministers long for the big city churches or the suburban churches. The small town setting provides an opportunity in ministry which is becoming more and more obsolete yet which can provide models of creative ministries for the urban areas.

#### *The Related Issues*

There are several important issues which some have suggested to be the key issue, and which will certainly figure in the formulation and working out of the key issue, but which I wish to describe here as related issues.

##### 1. Individualism and localization in ministry.

I have already dealt with the value of individualism as being a negative factor in working toward a corporate ministry for the entire Conference. Creative ministry stymied on the Conference level will generally take place only on the local level through a creative (or perhaps more accurately, a charismatic) individual minister. While the connectional system can wrap a minister up in subdistrict,

district and Conference meetings of all sorts and varieties its priorities are such that its ministry as a connection is often weak and ineffective.

This issue is a part of a greater problem, which I see as a reoccurring difficulty throughout church history.

2. Lack of authentic models of leadership. Many of the ministers who would otherwise be providing the leadership are gone from the Conference. Unfortunately there has not been a rapid influx of new ministers to fill those shoes. Nor have we dedicated ourselves to producing better ministers in the Conference, so that such models can be provided.

What does this say to the general church, or to the seminary students who are making preparations to return to the Conference? Is the key issue a problem of political leadership on the Conference floor? This too has its deeper roots.

3. Lack of adequate peer support. While there is a fellowship, it appears that some ministers have been alienated, to varying degrees, from this fellowship. There is a clearcut need for ministers who are seeking changes to be with other ministers who can provide support - political, moral, and emotional - for their creative endeavors.

But why have such groups proved inadequate for many, as we mentioned earlier? Does the Conference itself, through its leaders, foreclose such groups from participation

in the Conference processes? Or does the group self-righteously set itself up as the ecclesia, the remnant, only to discover that no one responds to such oddities? This too then leads us to a deeper issue.

*The Central Focus*

*The Relationship of the Individual Minister to the Institution of Which He is a Member.* All of the concerns which have been voiced to date I believe can be caught up in this particular problem, which is both sociological and theological in scope. Is the minister called as a prophet constantly to challenge the processes of his conference? Or is he called to sanction all conference activity? How do our concepts of ministry enable us to relate to the conference? Must we be a part of a group which is the "true" church as distinct from the conference, which is its imperfect, institutional form on earth? Must the minister dream of an ideal around which he tries to shape the ministry of the institution? Must the ministry go ahead and do what he must do, and hope that some historical dialectical process will eventually prove his points?

In the following chapters, as we look at how the ministers in the past have dealt with their institutions, I think that we need to think about three ideas:

1. What are possible relationships between the church and its institutions? What is the church of Jesus

Christ, and what is this institution of which we are a part? In what ways have they been related through history?

2. What are possible relationships between the minister and the institution? In what ways have ministers down through the years conceived of their ministry in respect to the institutions which claimed them? How did they define their ministry in light of their understanding of the institution and the church?

3. Finally, what are possible ways in which various ministers handled conflict between their ministry and the demands of the institution to which they belonged? How did they deal with their roles in the issues - through their practical ministry and according to their theology of ministry? Did they leave the institutions? Did they hear other voices, a la Joan d'Arc, from without the institution, and follow those voices even in opposition to their institution? Did they form a "church within a church?" Did they instead call for reform and renewal of the particular institution?

I think that we will be surprised at the rich diversity in the Christian tradition when it comes to this pervasive issue. The variety of answers may nevertheless spur us to re-examine our concept of the church, the institution, and the ministry. We may be surprised with our own answer to the questions raised above. The evidence presented in this chapter while disconcerting in parts,

joyous at other places, and at times a scandal, may indeed lead us to a scandalous conclusion.



## CHAPTER 3

MINISTER AND INSTITUTION IN THE  
HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

This chapter purports to trace the concepts of "church," "institution" and "ministry" throughout church history. Given the manifold difficulty of working through such a broad topic in one chapter, it is necessary to affirm the task. All too often, when we arrive at a question emerging from our struggle with the contemporary church, we will not consider at all the question in respect to the history of the Christian church. Rather we will only attempt to understand some of the immediate sources of the issues involved and seek to resolve our question from that meager supply of background information.

The purpose for working through the entire history of the church is given in the assumption that the church cannot be known as fully to us in one segment of history as it can if we look at its activity throughout history. The church is not static, but as an institution is involved in the flow of historical events. Because it is in history that we operate, the church is made known to us as we experience it through this history.

Some volumes have been written which deal exclusively with the church.<sup>1</sup> Likewise some works have been written

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<sup>1</sup>There are many different ways to deal with the church in history. Some thinkers look at the history of the

about the ministry of the church.<sup>2</sup> This chapter then is an attempt to look at the theological development of the nature of ministry in relationship to the institutional church. How do ministers in history deal theologically, if they do at all, with the institution and with the church?

One of the best ways to understand this is to discover how they handle conflicts (heresies, schisms, divisions, etc.) which arise during their respective periods. What does the minister say about the "church," as a local institution

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institution; others look at the history of the theological and christological concepts of the church - as the people of God," the household of God, the community of saints, the body of Christ, the Bride of Christ, the sons of God, the children of God, the ecclesia, the koininia, etc. Still others deal with the history of the church only in reference to its major figures, without much account of the average believers who participated in some way in the ongoing activity of the church.

<sup>2</sup>The collection of papers in the work edited by Niebuhr and Williams are inciteful, in that some attempt is made to relate the concepts of ministry to those of the nature of the church. But the authors write from different perspectives and utilize wide-ranging methodologies. Their sketches are in varying degrees of depth, and there are many gaps between the chapters which are critical to the development of the ministry. *The Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, ed. H. Richard Niebuhr and Daniel D. Williams (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).

One of the best recent books on the ministry is by Holmes, who utilizes a functionalist approach to work through the history of the ministry in a concise and consistent way. While he demonstrates adequately the ways in which this ministry is defined in relationship to the development of the church, he does not develop the implications theologically for the relationship of the minister to his particular institution. Urban T. Holmes, III, *The Future Shape of History* (New York: Seabury Press, 1971).

local community, ideal church, universal church, etc., and how does he handle conflict and division within the church? This is what we will be studying.

This material in the history of the church has been divided in different ways. In terms of the history of ministry, Urban Holmes gives us a simple, profound description of three transitions in the nature of ministry: from the minister as sacramental person, to the minister as officer of the sacrificial rite, to the preacher of the Word. This gets at the theological understanding of the role of the minister in his relationship to the church, as idea and as institution.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of ethics and church history, H. Richard Niebuhr in *Christ and Culture* does much of what I am interested in here, in that he looks theologically and ethically at the relationship of the church to the world and demonstrates five types which, while evident throughout most of the history of the church, surface to varying degrees in particular periods of history.<sup>4</sup>

Here I have decided to break down the history into six chronological contexts, the sixth being a summary of contemporary answers to the problem of the nature of the church. In each section, as clearly as possible, I will try

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<sup>3</sup>Holmes.

<sup>4</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1951).

to deal with the nature of the "church," the "institution," and the "ministry," and attempt to relate these concepts theologically. I also look at some of the conflicts in these periods, for I believe that it is often in these conflicts when these concepts are most conspicuously defined. I will generalize through the particular trends of each context rather than dwell upon particular spokespersons, whose specific ideas may be found in footnotes.

#### THE MINISTER AND THE COMMUNITY

##### *Church as Future and Institution as Waiting Communities*

Early in this first period the church is characterized as a community which needs to be unified against schism and heresy.<sup>5</sup> Therefore the commonality of the community is stressed as opposed to individuality.<sup>6</sup> Also, the community

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<sup>5</sup>Ignatius of Antioch is very much concerned about the unity of the church, and as such is a leading spokesperson for the development of the Christian community. "Everything is coming toward an end, and we stand before this choice - death or life." *Early Christian Fathers*, ed. Cyril C. Richardson, (Library of Christian Classics, 1; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), p. 95. And he quotes Polycarp as having said, ". . . make unity your concern - there is nothing better than that." (Ibid., p. 118) The source of this unity for Ignatius is the same as the source for our election, that is, devotion to Christ and conscious fellowship with his sufferings.

<sup>6</sup>Ignatius encourages us to gather together frequently to express this unity. The community is central for Ignatius. Nothing which is done on one's own, but only what is done together, is commendable. Ignatius encourages them to follow their bishops, presbyters, and deacons, which suggests that there were "general" believers who did not have these specific responsibilities. Only the congregation "under the

was generally more interested in the end, or parousia, than in the present world.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the second century this is changing. The church is more characteristically moving from an eschatological to a mystical emphasis in its relationship to the kingdom of God.<sup>8</sup> The growing community is still maintaining its separation from the world but is recognizing its responsibility for the world in which it exists and has its institutional life.<sup>9</sup>

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bishop" is inside the sanctuary, and this is where they must be if they are to "share God's bread" and be pure. Outside they are impure. Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>7</sup>In the anonymous sermon referred to as "II Clement," the church as a whole is seen as the continuity of the incarnation (par. 14). Here the author too follows the platonic concept of the phenomenal world as a copy of the immaterial forms. The church is a "pre-existent, spiritual reality" which "took visible form in the flesh of Christ" and is therefore manifested in the flesh of Christians. The Christian while waiting for the day of judgment must preserve (flesh) from defilement, and so share in the spiritual reality of the church. Ibid., pp. 188 ff.

<sup>8</sup>Ignatius begins to develop a mystical concept of the heavenly and earthly churches. As we will see when we look at his view of the ministry, in regard to this nexus between earthly and divine spheres he has a platonic view rather than an historical view. Therefore, there is a difference between the gathered community here and the one at the end. But this "end" is gradually moving to "above" even as early as Ignatius. In this community then, Christians have not reached perfection, but are "fellow students" waiting for perfection in the "other" community. Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>9</sup>In Diognetus there is a change, or at least a development, of this dualism between the world and the church. His theme is "The Church in the World." Christians, while not distinguished from the world in custom or language, are nevertheless aliens in the world. While they "busy themselves on earth . . . their citizenship is in heaven." While their

### *Minister as Sacred Person*

Urban Holmes is correct in that during this period the minister is seen as a sacred person.<sup>10</sup> In the early church there was a great variety of ministries to be performed, each carrying special importance and dignity. While there were some communities where one council of presbyters ruled,<sup>11</sup> recognition of figures of authority and the need for order encouraged very early the development of the community from a ministry of equal function to a preserved hierarchy.<sup>12</sup> Theologically the idea develops of the heavenly

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destiny is transcendent, they have a definite earthly responsibility. Diognetus then goes on to say, interestingly, that the Christians are "shut up in the world" in order to hold the world together. The desire is still to flee the world, but now there is a felt responsibility for the world. Ibid., pp. 216-218.

Clement of Alexandria sustains the idea that redemption is the content of rather than an escape from the world. Salvation is from sin and not from creation. Here is a basic shift which will lead us to our next section. The church, which is not of the world, nevertheless is for the world and fulfills the Creation. *Alexandrian Christianity*, eds. Henry Chadwick and J.E.L. Oulton (LCC,2), p. 36 from the introduction.

<sup>10</sup>Holmes, chapter 2.

<sup>11</sup>II Clement does not mention the episcopacy, but only refers to the presbyters (17. 3,5), possibly because he himself is with a ruling body of presbyters.

<sup>12</sup>It is well known that Ignatius develops the office of the bishop as head of the local congregation. Utilizing the platonic dualism which he develops for the church, he attributes authority to the bishops by saying that their office is the earthly antitype of the heavenly office. The bishop not only represents God (*Early Christian Fathers*, p. 76), but also represents the church (Ibid., p. 88). Igna-

ministry corresponding to the heavenly community.<sup>13</sup> This heavenly ministry actually places greater responsibility on the earthly ministers in their service to the world.<sup>14</sup>

*Minister and Institution in Worldly Conflict*

Conflict in the church calls for certain kinds of actions on the part of the ministers in the church during this period. The minister most importantly is a part of his congregation. He identifies himself with his flock.<sup>15</sup>

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tius is never consistent, but generally talks about the bishop as God's grace in the world, the presbyters as the earthly apostolic council, and the deacons as those who carry on the ministry of Christ - and he calls the deacons his "favorites!" (Ibid., p. 95) The bishop then is a prophetic, administrative and liturgical officer.

<sup>13</sup>Clement of Alexandria, who developed the spiritual idea of the church, says that ministry is actually performed by the "ministering angels for God in their administration of earthly things." There is a "meliorative service" for man, accomplished through the presbyters, and a "ministrative service" accomplished by these angels through the deacons, for man. All human affairs are a ministering to God. *Alexandrian Christianity*, pp. 94ff.

<sup>14</sup>Origen later put a greater emphasis upon the responsibility of the minister, particularly on the bishop, whose "debt" is heaviest of all, being demanded of him by "the Savior of the whole Church." (Ibid., pp. 306ff) And "retribution will follow if it be not paid."

<sup>15</sup>I Clement asks that those in dissent "reflect on the common nature of our hope." He is clearly speaking to certain leaders whom he distinguishes when he interprets Moses before God: Moses does not seek the extermination of his people who have gone astray nor a new nation, but he begs pardon for his people and requests that he be wiped out, if such should occur, along with them. *Early Christian Fathers*, p. 68.

He leads his congregation on in grace, rather than threatens them with death and defeat.<sup>16</sup> They were for affirmative action within the community.

The minister as representative both of God and of the church encourages unity of action as the church acts as Christ's disciples. In urging such unitive action, the minister suggests that the church understand both the faith of the opponents and their own.<sup>17</sup> Based upon their tradition as it speaks to their context, the minister demands of his congregation responsible rather than flippant action.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>To a church where schism was occurring, Clement actually praises the church for many of its virtues. He demonstrates to them what they should be doing by complimenting them as if they were already doing the good deed: ". . . you wept for the faults of your neighbors, while you reckoned their shortcomings as your own." (Ibid., p. 44) He reflects a great deal of grace for someone living in the eschatological community of the end.

<sup>17</sup>Ireneus, who talked about the general church scattered over the world with many diverse cultures and customs, says that we should understand what is going on in the world around us (Ibid., p. 389:)

"May it not be, as I have said, that God allows our dissolution into the earth for this very purpose, that being instructed in every way we should for the future be quite definite about all (these) things, being ignorant neither of God nor of ourselves?"

His entire work *Against Heresies* is a model of this kind of dilligent understanding.

<sup>18</sup>Clement of Alexandria, who tangled with the gnostics yet maintained the notion of Christianity as a community of redemption, said that we should understand and dialogue our opponents. "The effect of the heresies should therefore be to make one buckle to the toil of discovery and not to abandon it altogether." He says that we must not answer those with whom we disagree by "clever sophisms" (fit into our own system), but by "exactng knowledge from the



In conclusion, the early church saw the times changing from one in which their organized activity on earth was as an institution prepared for the end of the times, to that of an institution which reflected the heavenly activity of God and his kingdom above. Early in the period the minister had to maintain unity and identity in the community against schism and heresy, but later became one who encouraged understanding, dialogue and responsibility toward others and the faith.

#### THE CHURCH ABOVE THE INSTITUTION

While we think of the period of the council debates as a time of theological and christological formulation, there was also much discussion about the church. The traditional marks of the church were in development - catholic, apostolic, universal and holy - and surfaced in the council formulations. We have to search in and around these theological writings for references to the church.

#### *The Heavenly Church and the Institutional Representation*

In this context the church on earth has to work out its relationship not only to the church above but also to the society below. The church is no longer seen in the near future, but is now being seen in heaven - not so much at the end of time as above all time. This heavenly church is

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Scriptures and the tradition." (Ibid., pp. 371ff). Origen, who saw the awful responsibility of the minister, said that roots are necessary in this occupation. One can't be shallow or he will "fall away." *Alexandrian Christianity*, pp. 152ff.

itself viewed by most as an institutional church with ordered relationships. The church on earth is representative of this church in heaven, reflecting its structure and its ministry.

The church on earth is not a particular local church or group, but as manifested in all these groups is the whole catholic church for the earth.<sup>19</sup> Its participants are sinners

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<sup>19</sup>Cyril of Alexandria encourages the use of the term "catholic" to describe the nature of the church, and so develops the theology of the one, holy catholic church. While he acknowledges the widespread and various usages of the word "assembly," or ecclesia, as that which has called everyone out and assembled them together, he says that for this very reason (it is too widespread) we should stick with the "one holy Catholic Church," that church which is spread throughout the whole world and teaches "in its fullness all the doctrines." So he suggests that the new convert not ask for the kyriakon (the church building) or the ecclesia (assembly), but for the catholic congregation. We must do this because, in a kind of deontological salvation plan, we shall possess the kingdom of heaven and inherit eternal life only if in this catholic church we "receive her teaching and conduct ourselves aright." In keeping with the platonic dualism evident in the close of the previous period, he says that the catholic church presents the form and image of "Jerusalem which is above." *Cyril of Jerusalem and Menesius of Emesa*, ed. William Telfer (LCC,4), pp. 185ff.

Augustine develops the dualistic concept of the heavenly and earthly church. The theology of the church begins with the work of God in his election. God elects whom he will by providing them with a motive adequate to win his elect to faith and to obedience. It is God then who produces the grace of the church. God calls whom God wills to participate in the earthly church, and it is this church in which God dwells.

The church is not equal to God and Christ, but has fallen and has been separated from the heavenly church which is above. But the earthly church has been redeemed from all sin "by the blood of the sinless Mediator" and is now on a pilgrimage until that time when "we will know (the heavenly church) as it really is at the end of the age when we are joined to it to possess eternal bliss." The heavenly church is not fallen, and through God's act of redemption has

who find in the church forgiveness.<sup>20</sup>

There are some now who are leaving the church for various reasons: to live in a community where the practice of Christian devotion and discipleship can be more controlled; to escape a church which is becoming more

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restored the friendship between men and angels, who can help the earthly church on its pilgrimage. Central to his thesis is that the heavenly realm, while never fallen, will not be at peace except as it is set at peace together with the earthly realm. Augustinus. *Confessions and Enchiridion*, ed. Albert Cook Outler (LCC,7), pp. 375ff. From the *Enchiridion*.

<sup>20</sup> According to Augustine, the members of the church may be found without crime, but never without sin. Their hope is that there is forgiveness in the church for those who truly repent. Sins are not forgiven outside the church, but only inside. The church then, is "that place wherein the believers confront themselves as sinners and know they are forgiven." Ibid., pp. 376-8.

Augustine's church is one of loving action which in this activity unites Christ and his church. Those who love the members of the church become a part of the structure of Christ's Body: "thus the end will be the one Christ, loving himself; for the love of the members for one another is the love of the Body for itself." While this is a beautiful concept of the love which we have in common and "in Christ" it has also been referred to at some times as a justification for keeping this love turned inward and not outward. Augustinus, *Later Works*, ed. John Burnaby, (LCC 8), p. 341 and n.

Yet this exclusivism is not central for Augustine, which is evident by his concept of the universal church. He fought the racist Donatist assertion that the Catholic Church throughout the world has been polluted by its communion with the Church in Africa.

Here Augustine gives us the much-needed directive that we cannot go searching after the real church church by trying to leave the fallen church. For the real church is indeed exactly that church which has fallen and is comprised of that group of sinners. The fallen church is throughout the whole world, and not simply in the part. It is our responsibility to participate and encourage the practice of the forgiveness of sins wherever we find sinners.

amenable to the authority of the secular government;<sup>21</sup> to leave the world so that they might return more vigorously to respond to the needs of the congregation;<sup>22</sup> and/or to experience individually the vision of the mystery of God.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Creeping into the authority of the church is the increasingly eminent role of the secular government, a problem not totally developed until in our next period of history. The "venerable" Bede, writing on "Bishop Aidan," tells us that a king (Oswald) has the power to send for a bishop (Aidean) in order to make his entire nation Christian. *Early Medieval Theology*, ed. George E. McCracken (LCC,9), pp. 404-410.

From the time of Constantine the conversion of a nation could occur by the conversion of the king. While we can sit back and see what mischievous folly the national church can work, we must not miss the great promise it holds when the church and its ministers are allowed into a country to minister with the citizenry to God.

<sup>22</sup>During the second and early third centuries mostly individuals within congregations urged these directions. During the third century there was a transition from individuals to groups of ascetics who removed themselves from the regular established congregations. It is important to notice that this was occurring well before the church was adopted by the empire. While these groups began to develop a life apart from the congregations, the earliest groups (at least in Syria) still saw their ministry as being to the congregation. Basil and his groups were withdrawn from the regular congregation, yet worked pastorally for its members.

<sup>23</sup>In Egypt, however, a new direction took shape beginning around the life and teachings of St. Anthony - separation completely from the congregation - in lifestyle and in service. With these persons there was a strong individualistic emphasis, aided by Greek thought, in which the soul alone works out its own salvation. In the solitary vision of God the corporate community of the church becomes secondary. Benedict later stressed retirement and contemplation in preference to service in the secular society.

*The Minister as Official Representative*

The minister is now a more visible, if at times less revered, character. His activity is becoming an occupation, with all of the diverse hazards which accompany such a development.<sup>24</sup> In early medieval theology there is much clerical preoccupation with rules and standards - of worship, of penance, and of the general organization.<sup>25</sup>

Alcuin of York gives us his classical formulation of the relationship of the bishop and presbyter: formerly every presbyter was a bishop, now every bishop is a presbyter, but not every presbyter is a bishop.<sup>26</sup> He says that the bishop ought to be blameless as a steward and representative of God. Possibly it is a short step later for the Protestant reformers to transfer this awful responsibility of blamelessness and

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<sup>24</sup>For example, the father of Gregory of Nazianzus demanded that his son assist him in his ministry, and for that reason almost forcibly ordained him to the presbyterate. Gregory, wanting no part of that work, responded by fleeing to Pontus. While he was partly protesting, he was partly preparing as well, for he returned to Nazianzus and preached his first sermon at Easter of 362 A.D.! (*Christology of the Later Fathers*,) ed. Edward Rochie Hardy (LCC, 3), pp. 155 ff. Perhaps this experience led him to occupy his reflection on the church with the question of its relationship to the world.

<sup>25</sup>The anonymous "Address to the Clergy" around the eighth century suggests very elaborate vestments and rules for the Mass, which the presbyter can celebrate. The presbyter receives his authority from the bishop to exercise it over the life of the congregation. The presbyter for this reason must be "blameless." *Early Medieval Theology*, pp. 371-8.

<sup>26</sup>This discussion of Alcuin is found in *Ibid.*, pp. 199-203.

to the entire priesthood of believers, who in turn look upon themselves as a collective representation of Christ to the world.

In the ascetic tradition the ministry turns to discipline and rules for living - illustrated so well in the sayings of the desert fathers. In the Conference of Cassain we learn that there are different kinds of Egyptian monks with diverse interests, and that there are even some "bad" groups of monks.<sup>27</sup>

### *Church and World in Conflict*

While there were some during this period, like a bishop Claudius, who was not so soft on heretics and schismatics, thereby earning the title of the warrior bishop,<sup>28</sup> the major shapers of the tradition were thoughtful leaders who encouraged the development of the catholic church in the best sense of the word. Following Augustine, they encouraged the church in its conflicts, both with those outside the church and with those inside, to be faithful to its developing faith,<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>There are the coenobites, who live in communities; the hermits, who went from communities to live by themselves; and the Sarabaites, who are the bad ones because, in their cells of two and three, they are not very strict and they hoard too much money.

<sup>28</sup>*Early Medieval Theology*, p. 214.

<sup>29</sup>If anyone who rejects the church is troublesome, then Gregory of Nazienzus declares that the church must not shrink back, but meet the person on his own ground. He says that there is not room for indifference, for "we also think we have the spirit of God." The church must realize that it does have something to proclaim! (*Christology of the Later Fathers*, p. 215ff.

to be aware of its own sinfulness and its need for forgiveness, and to be understanding of those who differ from the majority.<sup>30</sup>

Clearly Augustine comes from his theology of the church. He is interested in keeping people together in a catholic church, ministering to their diverse needs as common sinners in need of forgiveness. He is not interested in separate groups which claim their own power to heal and pardon apart from the church.<sup>31</sup> In the Sayings of the Fathers,

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<sup>30</sup>Gregory of Nazianzus, who worked out his understanding of the church's relationship to the world, probes what motivates persons to reject the Church and sometimes to divide it: (1) the advantage the persons will gain; (2) their fear of other persons; (3) their "monstrous littleness of mind;" (4) their "neglect of pastors and governors;" (5) their "love of novelty and proneness to innovations;" (6) their consideration of the church as "unworthy of credit." These are not the reasons of a church under fire from heresies and persecution, but of a church deeply involved with the social norms and institutional problems of a different era. They remind us of some of the reasons we on the inside give for the criticism of those on the outside who have left. Ibid., p. 223.

<sup>31</sup>Augustine works from his concept that all men are good, yet all are sinful and fallen short- both those inside the church and those outside the church - heretics, schismatics and church persons. The Catholic Church stands fast in its conviction of love for God and neighbor. Therefore Augustine, in dealing with conflict, addresses himself in timely words to both those inside looking at a conflict and those who are forced outside of a congregation by its more carnal members.

For those secure on the inside, he develops this method in discerning truth: (1) hold fast what truth you grasp, and attribute it to the catholic church. (2) reject what is false and pardon the one who set up the conflict, for he too is a sinner; (3) listen to what follows as diligently as possible.

For the person driven from the congregation, he says: for the sake of peace, (1) endure the insult; (2) attempt no novelties (fearing heresy or schism); (3) teach persons how God is to be served, with true disposition and sincere

there is an illustration of "A brother who sinned, and the presbyter ordered him out of the church. But Abba Bessarion rose up and went out with him, saying: 'I too am a sinner.'"<sup>32</sup>

The real church is both the institution above and below, the one above helping the one below and giving it authority in its daily activity. The minister must work out his or her relationship between the heavenly and earthly churches, as a double representative, and figure out how he or she is going to act toward the presence of the government in the affairs of the church.<sup>33</sup>

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charity; (4) return when the tumult has subsided; (5) look to the good of those who drove you out; (6) form no "conventicles" of your own and defend the catholic church. The Father, according to Augustine, will crown this person secretly. *Augustinus, Earlier Writings*, ed. J.H.S. Burleigh (LCC, 6), pp. 231-5, 366.

<sup>32</sup>*Western Asceticism*, ed. Owen Chadwick (LCC, 12), p. 102.

<sup>33</sup>The story of the king and the bishop told by the Bede is remarkable not only for its display of the power and position of the government in relationship to the church, but also for its institutional handling of missionary activity and the way in which that work should be carried out. As Bede tells the story, the first bishop sent to king Oswald was not very effective in converting the people. When the rejected bishop went to the council, who sponsored him, one of the council members named Aidan told the bishop,

"It seems to be, my brother, that you have been harder than is just in dealing with unlearned hearers, and that contrary to the teaching of the apostles, you have not first offered them the milk of softer doctrine, until gradually nourished on God's Word, they should be strong enough to take the more perfect teaching and to make God's teaching more sublime!"

The council liked the suggestor, however, as well as the suggestion, and appointed Aidan to the post instead. (*Early Medieval Theology*, pp. 404-410) Isn't that the way it usually works?



## THE INSTITUTION AS THE CHURCH

The "middle ages" is a rambunctious period of many diverse movements and philosophies and ministries all under the guise of a universal, catholic church. It is a period of reforms and many attempts at reform. This "later" period to which we are referring here, from about 1000 A.D. to 1300 A.D., is characterized by a general restlessness on the part of the church that something within itself is not quite right, and is also a time in which the church questions its ever-growing relationship to the state.

*Heavenly and Earthly Church as One Powerful Institution*

Roland Bainton is correct in saying that the two goals of the church were to Christianize the society and to accomplish this by purifying and emancipating herself from the control of the state.<sup>34</sup> Yet beyond their conflicts, both church and state shared a responsibility for a Christian world order.

For the many ordinary people who lived in this "Christendom" the church on earth was a monolithic force so important in their lives that it merged with the heavenly institution in forming one massive field of influence, one church to which they owed their allegiance.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>*Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, p. 89.

<sup>35</sup>The work of the local parish, often ridiculed during this period, developed extensively and was for the most

The major thinkers are concerned about the relationship of the church and the state, which in the conflict are actually after the same goals of the Christianization and stabilization of society.<sup>36</sup> Thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas theologically provide the rationale for the church to maintain its hold on the spiritual, if not always on the secular, lives of the people.<sup>37</sup> Also the mystics and monastics are

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part responsible to the people and their needs. The parishes in England during the thirteenth, described so thoroughly by Moorman, were basically three in kind: (1) the ones early organized on diocesan lines, (2) the independent local "minsters," or the more remote churches served by communities of clergy, and (3) the landlords who built local churches for their villages, from which we get the parochial system. This last church, called a "benefice," was as much an estate as a spiritual responsibility, which caused all kinds of confusion. J.R.H. Moorman, *Church Life in England in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: University Press, 1945), pp. 3-7.

<sup>36</sup> John of Salisbury, in the *Policraticus*, says that the Prince is under and servant to the law and to the priests. He (the state) does the dirty work not worthy of the church, but it is the church which grants him this authority. (*A Scholastic Miscellany: Anselm to Ockham*, ed. Eugene R. Fairweather (LCC, 10), pp. 250 ff). Therefore in a sense he represents the church just as much as do the priests.

Anselm was caught between the Church of England and the Pope over the investiture issues. Who should be in charge of appointments of pastors for churches in England - the king nearby or the pope far away? Anselm was primarily interested in the freedom of the church to perform its functions in human life. Because of this he originally sided with the movement for reform, but he was also interested in the maintenance of papal authority and therefore later found himself siding with Paschal II, an anti-Gregorian. *Ibid.*, pp. 61, 208-211.

<sup>37</sup> Working between the new Aristotelianism on the one hand and the neo-platonism of Augustine and Pseudo-dionysius on the other, Thomas' concept of the church is similar to that of Augustine. Whereas Augustine was clearly distinguishing between the church in heaven and the church on the earth, Thomas has brought the spiritual church down a notch or two, so that it might be an experience of persons still on earth.

The church provides the sacramental assistance toward

very strong at this time, and are clear about the priority of the church in heaven as being the one in which they have their faith and trust.<sup>38</sup>

*An Undefined Ministry*

Moorman points out that the local priest had a dual loyalty - to the bishop and to the Lord. Some rectors in England regarded their "livings" as spiritual responsibilities; others regarded them as financial assets. The financially poorer and more independent the rector the greater was his loyalty to the church. The wealthier and higher up the ladder, the more he tended to stay away from his responsibility.

Absenteeism from parishes was common because of "pluralism," the practice of individual ministers holding more than one parish. The bishops were often no better than the

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the spiritual end. In this sense then it is a functionary: (1) as custodian of the divine law; (2) as helper in ordering the temporal life; and (3) as a two-fold organization - institution within the world and monastic order without. (Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, pp. 129-137). Thomas makes it clear that in the natural world the church exists alongside the government, but in the spiritual world it is sole possessor of the key.

<sup>38</sup>There was also a strong mystical tradition which related only to the spiritual church, defined typically as union with God. (Cf. Jan Van Rysbroeck, who lived in the early fourteenth century. *Late Medieval Mysticism*, ed. Ray C. Petry (LCC, 13), pp. 285 ff). Some mystics taught total renunciation of the world, while others such as Nicholas of Cusa taught a combination of contemplation and action. He preached the church as the "servants of the eternal Kingdom in the temporal world." In the Eucharist, he said that Christ the Head, united to the Father, gives life to the faithful in a redemptive work in and for the world. Ibid., p. 358, by the editor.

rectors.<sup>39</sup>

The monasteries owned a great number of churches. The vicarage system arose out of the custom of monasteries appointing certain persons, not always competent clergy, to serve these appropriated churches. The Lateran Council of 1215 declared that in the future the vicar must receive a minimum wage and have secure tenure.<sup>40</sup>

*Conflict Within the Church and Without*

Moorman describes the chief ills of the local clergy as being simony, ignorance and the making of money out of the sacraments.<sup>41</sup> The church's excessive strength lead to poor

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<sup>39</sup>Thomas Cantilupe, in the year before his elevation to the episcopate, was,

"Archdeacon of Stafford, Canon of Lichfield, precentor of York, Prebendary of S. Paul's and Hereford, and Rector of at least ten parishes: Wintringham, Deighton, Hampton Bishop, Ripple, Kempsey, Dodderhill, Snitterfield, Sherborne Decani, Bradwell and the family living of Aston Cantlow."

There were other problems associated with the ministry, not the least of which was the appointment by the pope of his own persons rather than local election of priests to serve in parishes. (Moorman, pp. 28-29) Bainton points out (*Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, pp. 86-8) that three functions formerly denied the clergy now are appropriated: business, government, and war.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45.

<sup>41</sup>Robert Grossteste, an otherwise cautious observer, describes the low standard of the clergy in words meant for the pope to hear:

(They are) utterly sensual, given over to fornication, adultery and incest, sunk in every kind of gluttony, and (to passover quickly) polluted with every sort of depravity and crime and abomination and as having 'gone a-whoring with their own inventions'. Moorman, pp. 214ff.

and careless ministry. It had far too many clergy with far too little effective discipline. Actually, the framework was well-organized and efficient but defenseless against vested interests and the power of money.<sup>42</sup> There was very little communication between ministers and their superiors, and the congregations were often alienated as well.

The ascetics, as distinguished from the monastics (Many of whom were in service to the world), stressed the inner transformation and sanctification of one's life rather than a striving for institutional changes. The one exception already mentioned was Nicholas of Cusa, who combined contemplation and action.

#### THE INSTITUTION AS THE CHURCH IN SCHISM AND REFORMATION

The primary contrast between the previous period and the one before us now is that, whereas in the earlier period the reforms generally went sour, now the reformers begin to have a great deal of success, not so much within the church as in their break from the institution. In general, the Gregorian reforms did not work out for very long and were diluted. The peace campaigns of the early years led instead to the disastrous (for the church) crusades. The monks simply could not keep themselves poor for very long.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> *Ministry in Historical perspectives*, p. 106.

Pauck writes that the consistent criticism of the Reformers against the Roman Catholics was for confining the Word of God to a historical, man-made institution. The Word of God should go freely among all persons.<sup>44</sup> While this is true, for many of the persons swept along in the movements of the times the question was as much one of authority over their lives as it was the encaptured Word in the Catholic Church. In the early middle ages I reported that the authority for the institutional church came from the heavenly church above. In the later medieval period the institution claimed its authority by being the sole church and possessor of the keys to the kingdom. The protesting reformers demanded that Christian look above the church and state to the Word of God as the sole authoritative source. In this new and radical theological emphasis, the authority of the established church, established government, the structures of church and secular governments, their relationships to each other - all were called into question.

*The Gathered Believers and Their Institutional Reforms*

Central to the downfall of the via antiqua and the beginning of the via moderna was the libertarian and the voluntaristic thought of nominalism, of which Thomas Ockham was the primary exponent. The Augustinian critique of natural order and reason finds expression in Ockham's

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

"emancipation of the divine will from any intelligible order of moral values," according to Eugene Fairweather. This liberation "pretty well completes the dissolution of the nexus between nature and supernature, reason and faith."<sup>45</sup> The freedom of God now being expressed by Ockham leads to a radical critique of the social order, contributes to an anti-papal stance, and surfaces later in Calvinism's doctrines concerning the "apostles of royal sovereignty."<sup>46</sup>

Martin Luther believed that the church should respond to the needs of the people in the best way possible, forever keeping in mind the goal of the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. The institution may have to be forever in reformation as it responds to the Word of God in each circumstance, for where the Word of God is received in faith, there is the church. Church and civil authorities should cooperate in response to the Word, for

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<sup>45</sup> *A Scholastic Miscellany*, p. 373.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 374. Ockham also attacks the papacy by denying sole authority to that institution. He first states clearly the church's position, so clearly in fact that it appears to be his own. The pope holds both swords - material and spiritual, state and church. The emperor is the vassal of the pope. He then "destroys these claims" by his argument, and in conclusion states that while Christ committed to Peter the "heavenly emperium," with power over wayfarers to heaven, and while the pope is therefore superior to the earthly emperor, yet "as no one holds the heavenly imperium from the pope in fief, so also no one holds the earthly imperium from him." (*Ibid.*, pp. 438ff) The keys to both earth and heaven come from beyond the pope, and are not necessarily mediated through him.

both institutions are involved.<sup>47</sup>

For Calvin the church is the gathered community of the elect known only to God. The institution is also essential to progress and edification in the faith as God's

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<sup>47</sup>In a very real sense, the public authorities were the ones who carried out ecclesiastical change. In the establishment of churches on the European continent, the interplay of church and state officials is informative. In Saxony the consistories, which regulated the discipline of the church, were responsible to the prince, the secular authority. In Hesse the superintendents may have had full episcopal authority for discipline, but they were also responsible to the prince, who was here deemed the highest "ecclesiastical authority." At Wurtemberg, the government and spiritual affairs of the territory were neatly divided between two groups, but the theologians and canon lawyers and other church-related persons played a great role in the civil government. So in the territories we find a mixture of church and government institutions and roles.

In the towns we find the development of what is more familiar to us today, i.e., government by a "civil" authority independent from the church yet which calls itself "Christian." The issue here becomes, not by whom and what institution the town will be run, rather how the town will be governed. Will the government be Christian in its work or will it manifest other characteristics? In this case then, the church's function is to encourage the town to subject all of its life to Christian discipline and the Gospel demands. But the church cannot demand de jure through the government. In this situation the preachers have much greater freedom from the political magistrates. *Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, pp. 122-124.

So in the towns the church was only one of many voluntary institutions which could appeal to the authorities. It exercised great freedom in articulating the Word of God, but did not have the governing power to direct and control the practices of the town.

From this it is just a short step to Bucer, who proposed that voluntary fellowships be begun in each town within the regular institutional framework of the church. He said that the work of the civil government was power and coercion, and that of the church government was fellowship and the church life. Both of these are free from each other, yet bound together under the Word of God. (Ibid., p. 127) The Council rejected his concept.



own institution.<sup>48</sup> Here both the "elect" and everyone else gather to worship and to declare their faith. But any distinction is known only to God and not to humans.<sup>49</sup>

Bullinger's additional treatment of the church as elect and as institution also insists on the utility of the institutional church, but mostly as an expression of the real church fellowship.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>There is no salvation nor forgiveness apart from the church, according to Calvin, for this is where God makes his presence known, in his own institution: "Therefore, to teach us that the treasure offered to us in earthen vessels is of inestimable value (2 Cor. 4:7), God himself appears and, as the author of this ordinance, requires his presence to be recognized in his own institution." John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), II, 284.

It is through this institution then, that God "gradually raises his people to heaven." Ibid., II, 286.

<sup>49</sup>Following the Augustinian illustration that "there are many sheep without and many wolves within," he says that those who seem most good often fall, and those most despaired of are by God's goodness "recalled to life." Therefore, for Calvin as for Luther, it is imperative that the church daily bestow the forgiveness of sins, for this is essential to the church. Judgment of members should be done according to "charity:" by their confession of faith, their regularity of conduct, and their participation in the sacraments. Only this can be done but no more. Ibid., II, 282-297.

<sup>50</sup>He makes the distinction between the invisible church as the smaller of the elect and the visible church as the larger group of those who profess their faith. There are some cases where the elect may be separated from the fellowship of the visible church, but this is not typical. The elect may be discerned by: (1) the fellowship of the Spirit, (2) their sincere faith, and (3) their two-fold charity.

His further distinction of the militant church, as the visible and invisible churches on earth, and the triumphant church, the single body of true believers already in heaven, makes it difficult to see the unity of the elect on earth and the redeemed in heaven. Also, Bullinger may be insistent in his value attached to the institutional church, but it appears as an apology, while the spiritual fellowship of the elect

While the radical reformers often cooperated with, or even maintained their own, civil communities, they furthered the idea that the true church is the group of persons who are the elect of God and are called into true fellowship with God and one another. For them the institutional church as maintained by both the papists and the Lutherans, the Anglicans and the Calvinists, is so much dead weight.<sup>51</sup>

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emerges as the true church. *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (LCC, 24), pp. 35 ff, 265-6.

<sup>51</sup>The radical reformers felt that the reforms of territorial protestantism didn't go far enough, or were disenchanted with its institutions, or did not find the moral aspects suitable to their discipline. (Notes for the following two paragraphs come from the introduction to *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. George Huntston Williams (LCC, 25). At any rate, they developed this idea of the communion of saints as being the real church, as opposed to the church which is forever involved in institutional hangups and squabbles. There were many different reform groups, each with their own particular convictions, some of which varied radically. The Anabaptists looked to the church of the past, and sought to model their communities on this ancient early church. They abandoned any hope of a Christian society with political boundaries. Rather than the church being coterminous with the spiritual church, the church on earth is waiting for the church of the end of time.

The Spiritualists did not look back to the past, but directly to the future where the church of the end time will be gathered. For some groups this apocalyptic ideal led them to seek revolutionary relief. Other groups were content with the invisible fellowship. While most groups looked for a total separation of church and state, some of the Anabaptist groups perfectly wed spiritual and civil functions into their own governing state. In England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the more radical reformers, the puritans, were very much involved in active civil government and for awhile controlled the government of the country.

*Minister as Preacher, Teacher, and Discipliner*

For Luther the ministry of the Word is "common to all Christians."<sup>52</sup> But he goes on to say that everyone can function as a priest only in a time of emergency. Otherwise, in order to avoid confusion, the community chooses one person to perform "these functions" for them publicly. He interprets Paul in saying that the minister is the possessor neither of an estate nor of an order, but merely has an office with a specific function. Any other procedure must be one forced upon the community by necessity and still must be commended by the common understanding of the faith.

For Calvin, the ministers are substitutes for God himself, and do God's work by their lips as tools of his Word. The election of these pastors does not belong to one individual, but should be carried out by other pastors, with the people approving. Since the minister's "secret" call is combined with the "public" call, the minister does not belong to himself any longer, but belongs only to God and the church.

The minister emerging from this reformation is a new breed. He comes from the middle class alongside the burghers. The higher class ministers were often associated with the Roman Church. The ministers in the towns were trained, while the ministers in the rural countryside were mostly without higher

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<sup>52</sup>Martin Luther, *Works* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1955-8), XL, 21.

education. The peasants were left out and alienated from ministry.

### *Conflict and Division*

Luther worked with his concept of the church as the community of the Word, and the institution as the reforming vehicle, to undertake revision where necessary according to need. He saw the civil government also as being responsible with the church under the Word to affect change, both within the church and in the society.<sup>53</sup>

Calvin, working between the freedom of God and the essentiality of his institutional church, also urged the congregation to be careful in judging others, always being aware of their own unworthiness, always understanding the church as a mixture of good and bad which stands in need of forgiveness. While allowing for the freedom of God to work as he wills it, Calvin believes that the church as an institution is essential to the community of the elect as well as to those who only publicly profess their faith.

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In undertaking a new change, he suggested this approach to one group of Christians:

1. Approach God in prayer, humility, and confession of your own sins which have brought on this misery and captivity. Do this individually and in common. In other words Luther realized that we are not the standard bearers necessarily, but it is actually our sin and not those of our "opponents" which has brought on the problem.

2. Have assurance that not you but God is pushing this matter.

3. Come together freely. Elect one or more to be your

Defection from this church and its ministry must not be taken lightly, for it is unlikely that the church will be found apart from this local, structured body.<sup>54</sup>

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representatives to minister in this matter.

4. In conflict, "our rock . . . fears no . . . stormy clouds . . . but is sure of itself and confidently awaits clear skies." Ibid., XL, 40ff.

<sup>54</sup>Calvin, II, 291, maintains throughout that we can only judge a congregation by their order of Word and sacraments. But caution is urged. A church should not be discarded so long as these remain, "though it may otherwise teem with numerous faults:"

" . . . I have no wish to patronise even the minutest errors, as if I thought it right to foster them by flattery or connivance; what I say is, that we are not on account of every minute difference to abandon a church, provided it retain sound and unimpaired that doctrine in which the safety of piety consists, and keep the use of the sacraments instituted by the Lord. Meanwhile, if we strive to reform what is offensive, we act in the discharge of duty."

(Ibid. II, 195ff). Therefore we ought to tolerate imperfection of conduct. The church of God is not holy and pure, but a mixture of good and bad.

In reference to the New Testament, he tells us that Paul does not discard or leave the wicked town church at Corinth, but acknowledges and heralds it as the church of Christ. Why? Because that's exactly what they are, as bad as they seem to be. Calvin does take, in places, a hard line toward the wicked, for he says that they should be excluded from the fellowship, and in this discharge of duty the pastors are not strict enough. Yet while the pious persons may "shun the society of the wicked," he may not renounce the communion of the church, for the wicked do not effect the Word or the sacraments, which come from God.

Finally, as if faced with a situation in which many righteous persons may be about to leave the church, Calvin offers these helpful suggestions:

1. The righteous people who think that they are so, will revolt from the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the only Kingdom of righteousness.

2. Anyone who leaves this external society of the church, in doing so will endanger being cut off from the communion of saints.

3. There are some righteous people in every church.

4. Some persons in the churches who are "diseased" know that they are, and are often aroused by the Lord and

## THE CHURCH AND ITS INSTITUTIONAL BRANCHES

### *The Church for the World and the Institution for the Community*

In the Anglican communion there was a close correlation between the church and the state, the leaders of the state belonging to the church and the leaders of the church active and involved, especially in the role of consultation, in the state. While the preaching of the Word is still essential, the church as an institution becomes important once again as a dispenser of the mysteries of God to man through its hierarchical leadership. While the tractarians in the later eighteenth century may have encouraged an otherworldly aspect of Christian life and devotion, the Anglican Church has profoundly been involved in society. The institution of the church is the kingdom on earth.

The social gospelism of the late nineteenth century extended the importance of the work of the church in redeeming the world. F. D. Maurice talked about the church as the kingdom of Christ and the priest as its servant, in espousing his Christian socialism. From 1686 until his time,

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aspire to greater integrity.

5. The holiest persons sometimes make the most greivous fall.

6. A few bad apples will not spoil the entire image of the church.

7. Divine judgment is more important in estimating the church than is human opinion.

8. The church is holy in that it makes daily progress toward the goal. The adjective "holiness" has not been attained but is attributed to the Church only by God's grace. Ibid.

the Anglican cleric had been more of a defender of the order of Church and State than a reformer or guider.

The puritan tradition has played an important role, along with the other dissenters and nonjurors, in making the religious tradition of England pluralistic. While Christianity may have cooled after the eighteenth, and particularly after the nineteenth, century in England, this puritan tradition had an even greater effect on American denominationalism, which is our next concern. The puritans were not at all ascetics, and fought hard at times to dominate the secular realm of government. After the restoration in England, the puritan upsurge cooled temporarily only to influence less than a century later the evangelical revival, which is the concern of our next chapter on Wesley.

The church in America was to many observers a wilderness church similar to the early church. In the deistic belief of the founding fathers for complete freedom of expression in religious matters was found the freedom of the evangelical preachers to work in whatever manner possible for the conversion of all persons to the Gospel. Closely allied with this was the Anabaptist influence which called for deep commitment to the local community and its churches.

The American church then is characterized by the principle of adaptation and voluntary commitment. The local churches took priority over the universal church in terms of belief and action. The church and state were radically split and the role of the church rather than to be involved in the

work of the secular government, was to persuade the leaders of the governing bodies.

Concern for the individual's soul in most local churches still takes precedence over the concern for social affairs, which is removed from the local churches and placed in the hierarchy of the denomination. In the unlikely alliance of English Independents and American rationalists<sup>55</sup> the denominational church as both local and national, a hierarchical institution, dominates the American religious tradition.

*Minister as Evangelist and Organizer*

The early priest of the Anglican communion was a preacher of the Word, teacher of the faith, celebrant of the mysteries of the communion, and spiritual guide in matters of faith, which included spiritual and secular affairs.<sup>56</sup> The Puritan pastor was not only a preacher to the vulgar, but was the foremost figure in the initiation of and preparation for public worship, and in pastoral care and oversight, which included visiting the sick, catechizing, disciplining and counseling.<sup>57</sup>

Ministry in America has a balance, to varying degrees, between the ordained ministers and the laity, although in most cases the laity in persuasion and power tip the scales. The

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<sup>55</sup>*Ministry in Historical Perspectives*, p. 248.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 160.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 188-191.



ministers were actually instrumental in their separation from the laity, rather than the other way around, in that they needed to exert collectively their skills in persuasion and political manipulation and control<sup>58</sup> Reciprocally, anti-clericalism was not secular, but sectarian, as the ministers attempted to wield influence though with little power.<sup>59</sup>

While the institutional church in America was developing into a great plurality of bodies, many claiming their own truth with few connections between them, the ministers saw as their double emphasis the conversion of sinners to the church and the organization of institutions for the sanctification of believers, to keep them from backsliding.

*Pluralism, Development and Schism*

While the Anglicans were much involved in the work and affairs of the state, quite out in the open, the Puritans were centering their social life in evangelical and disciplinary activity. After the Restoration, the Puritans were required to register as dissenters so that formally their conflict within the church was institutionalized, and therefore useless in regard to making a real difference in the life of the church.

The American emphasis on voluntarism and localism

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 217.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 235.

made rapid development of many institutions possible. Schisms occurred partly in response to the frontier, then in response to divergent interests and beliefs in the various denominations. As the churches break off and then develop their own institutions, these institutions, because they are such, develop certain characteristics and patterns of activity which have an influence on the doctrine of the church.

Today there are many institutions which have basically the same doctrines, therefore lending themselves to similar interests in theology and the development of tradition. Yet they require their own attention, and as organized patterns of activity are the most visible aspect of the churches' separation. So while the church is thought of by most denominations today as one universal body of believers, its institutional expression (which is necessary according to most members within denominations) is greatly pluralistic and divergent.

#### THE CHURCH IN THE INSTITUTIONS

##### *Contemporary Views of the Church and Its Ministry*

Today we discover that we are in a pluralistic period in which many kinds of views of the church abound, most of which have their predecessors in some particular expressions which we have previously discovered. The following are some recent works under several headings, according to how I see their relationship to the views just discussed.

*The Church From the World: The Communal Fellowship.*

Emil Brunner, in *The Misunderstanding of the Church*, states as his thesis that the church is not an institution, nor does it have anything to do with an institution, but is simply a community of persons who share a common faith and belief in Jesus Christ. He traces, as we have done here, the development of the church through the centuries. Whereas he finds that the early church manifested the fellowship, the church after the second and third centuries began to leave the idea of a fellowship and became an institution, which he says is a perversion of the teaching of Jesus and the earliest communities. The minister, as a participant primarily in the fellowship and only functionally in the institution, can only encourage the growth of the ecclesia. His church can never become the ecclesia. Existing institutions are only means, and God, in his freedom, will make the ecclesia with or without the churches.<sup>60</sup>

This view is the "granddaddy" of many children. For example, D. H. Miller, in a conventional summary for his denomination of *The Nature and Mission of the Church*, states that the church is a gathering of the ecclesia, or "the people who belong to the Lord." The church is divine, not human; a fellowship of faith, not an institution; corporate,

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<sup>60</sup>Emil Brunner, *The Misunderstanding of the Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953).

not individualistic; universal, not local; and a body of the living Christ, not a guardian of a tradition. The church has historic roots, and he even goes so far as to say that form is necessary. But he is contradicting himself to say that the church is not an institution, that there is nothing local about it, and that it has not had to deal with its tradition. For him also the minister is a person who functions in a particular role, but not as a special status nor order. Yet the church is divine, not human. Therefore, the minister cannot ontologically be a part of the church, but can only serve the development of the ecclesia - if he can discern what that exactly is.<sup>61</sup>

This idea of the church as a fellowship takes many other forms. It is evident in the small group movements as many leaders have sought apologiae for its existence. Charles Olsen, in *The Base Church*, also follows Brunner in describing the small group fellowship as the real church, as distinct from the denominational institutions, which merely hinder the development of the fellowship. Olsen, while urging that these groups need to be connected in some way, deals mostly with the dynamics of the small group. While the small group has been an important part of the Christian tradition from the earliest monastics, and indeed from the earliest Christian communities, to the small groups of Wesley, they have usually

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<sup>61</sup>Donald Miller, *The Nature and Mission of the Church* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1958).

integrally related to the more developed institution, which also serves some very necessary functions.<sup>62</sup>

Another form which this thesis takes is not usually associated with this idea, yet when we think of the church and the institution, as we are doing here, the similarities are significant. Following Barth, who suggests that the uniqueness of the Christian is that he already knows God's universal plan of salvation, Juan Luis Segundo says that the church is both a particular and universal reality. It is universal in that it embraces all humanity from the creation, but it is particular in that, through the incarnation of God in Christ and his redemption of all persons, there exists within mankind a community of "sign-bearers" who know that there is a universal church and plan for all people.

The good part about his ecclesiology is that he grounds his doctrine of redemption in the doctrine of creation, following Barth, so that the church cannot really be the true church, the universal church, unless it is in dialogue with the world, which is the universal church. The problem is that he insists upon the necessity of the clarity and transparency of the sign-bearers, to the extent that those who cannot take the church that seriously are better off outside the community of the elect.<sup>63</sup> This is very close to

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<sup>62</sup>Charles M. Olsen, *The Base Church* (Atlanta: Forum House, 1974).

<sup>63</sup>Juan Luis Segundo, *The Community Called Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1973).

Calvin, who said that the community of the elect and the visible church must be in dialogue together; but Calvin was careful to state that we cannot be sure who are the elect and who are not. Therefore we cannot so easily cast persons out of the church, nor should we be so quick to leave the institution in search of the real saints. Segundo should practice such caution.

The problem with this expression of the church is obvious: the church cannot be pegged to nor divided by a particular group of saints who fellowship together, no matter how inclusive we might say that this fellowship is. The freedom of God is called into question, for the church which we decide to be the true fellowship of believers will possibly prove to consist of the worst sinners. Also, how can we decide what is "institutional" and what is the real "fellowship?" We all participate in patterns of behavior, even in patterns of religious behavior. If we do not go it alone, but join others in some kind of grouping, with some standardized patterns of behavior, then we are participating in a kind of religious institution, and must deal with that institution. The question then becomes, how can we relate to this institution if we decide that the institution is not real or significant, but feel that what is important is an ephemeral fellowship, without pattern, form or structure? The church must deny such a bifurcation of matter and spirit and reassert the goodness of creation and its possible fulfillment.

*The Church For the World: The Institutional Vessel.*

James Gustafson's work on the *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* provides the key reference here. In nearly a categorical refutation of the kind of thought described above, Gustafson says that the church's character as an earthen vessel actually makes it effective. The church is "a human community with an historical continuity identifiable by certain beliefs, ways of work, rites, loyalties, outlooks and feelings."<sup>64</sup> The church therefore is common to other organizations and institutions; indeed, the church is an institution. It is a natural community, a political community, a community of language, of interpretation, of memory and understanding, and of belief and action. The one thing that makes the church unique is its object of loyalty in God, and its center of life in Jesus Christ.<sup>65</sup>

The church then is both an institution and a fellowship at once; the institution is the necessary human order of the incarnation and the fellowship - the gift. In sociological lingo the institution provides continuity through time and the fellowship, unity.

Arnold Come in *Agents of Reconciliation* appreciates the relationship of the institution to the fellowship in his call for a renewal of the church and the ministry. He follows

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<sup>64</sup>James Gustafson, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 3.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, entire.

Gustafson in that sense, but in many ways it is difficult to know exactly where Come is going. His theology is that of a working churchperson, and tends to draw from diverse elements which are not always mutually compatible.

The nature of the church is found in its election. God calls us to love and to serve, and in this common possession and mission community is created. The nature of the church, as that of the reconciled community, is inseparable from the function of the church, as agents of reconciliation. The structure of the institutional church is a function of the church in mission. Because Christian action is necessarily contextual, the structure will take various forms and organizations. There will be an inner-directed ministry, for the church is a human organization. There will also be an outer, world-directed ministry, for the church is elected historically as an agent for redemption. Yet God is the real actor, who will complete universal cosmic reconciliation. We are but his agents.<sup>66</sup>

Stephen Rose also has written for the renewal of the church, particularly along ecumenical grass roots. For him the church and the institution are virtually one. The church should be in the world as a servant, yet should not fear to be over against the world as prophet. The essence of the church is to be in ministry to persons - and in doing this the nature of the ministry must be redefined. Rose

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<sup>66</sup>Arnold Come, *Agents of Reconciliation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).



like Come calls for an invigorate laity, but he recognizes the necessity of ministerial leadership and spiritual persons (bishops). The new ministry will be ecumenical on the local levels at least, and will involve what he calls chaplaincy, teaching and abandonment, which more or less relate to the older forms of preaching and pastoral functions, edification, and missions - but with updated meanings. Apparently then for Rose, the effectiveness of the church as "church" depends upon the appropriateness and effectiveness of the institution as an institution.<sup>67</sup>

The handbook of ministry the past dozen or more years has been H. R. Niebuhr's *Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry*. He defines the church as "the subjective pole of the objective rule of God," and stresses that the church is not the kingdom of God, but addresses its attention as a community to God. It will always have to find its expression somewhere between the nature of a community and an institution, as both a unity and a plurality, as a local and universal community, as a protestant and catholic principle. It will have to discover its relationship with the world. Rather than being the church for the world, a la Come, the church is the companion of the world before God. Therefore the church is distinct from the world only in that it might be more aware of its purpose, which is the increase of love of God and neighbor. The church too as an institution

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<sup>67</sup>Stephen Rose, *The Grass Roots Church* (New York: Holt, 1966).

has a distinctive tradition, a process constantly changing and in need of criticism.

The role of the minister must be seen in the context of the purpose of the church in its given time. Today the purpose of the minister, as the pastoral director, is to bring into being a people of God who will serve the purpose of the church in the local community and the world, in cooperation with the world.<sup>68</sup>

I think we have moved some distance in this section, yet the ideas are basically the same. While for Gustafson the church is both the fellowship and the institutional vessel (one cannot exist without the other) for Niebuhr the church is also both an institution and a fellowship which must find its expression in each given context, in relationship to the world of which it is a constant companion.

This position is very close to my own, yet I think that there is a distinction being made here between the church and the institution, however so subtle. Is there something really different between the fellowship and the institutional structure? Is grace mediated both by "order" and by the gift of God, or is there something more inherently theological about the gift of God as opposed to the human order? I think that this can be worked out if we deal with the concepts of sin and creation together, which these writers generally fail to do.

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<sup>68</sup>H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).

*The Church In the World: The Organic and Processive Community.* Still another way to look at the nature of the church is organically and in terms of process philosophy. F. W. Dillistone describes the church as both an organic and covenantal society and community. He uses language about the body of Christ and the nature of the organism to talk about the organic nature of the church. He also dips into covenantal theology of both the Old and New Testaments to describe the necessity of the covenant to make the organism work. The church must be dynamic and personal, or it is not effective. Fringe-types of organizations, such as that of the monastic and sectarian groups, and static-types of organizations, such as that of the imperial and contractual groups, are not organic and covenantal, and therefore are not really the church as it should be. The church is not a particular nature, structure nor pattern, he says, but a "particular ethical way of response."<sup>69</sup>

Finally, Norman Pittenger bases his view of the church as a social process on his metaphysical understanding of process philosophy and the changing world. For Pittenger, God as cosmic love lures us by faith toward concrete decisions for the cosmic good, and seeks our ongoing participation in the movement of "love-in-action." The only way we can know Christ is through participation in the

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<sup>69</sup>F. W. Dillistone, *The Structure of the Divine Society* (Philadelphia; Westminster Press, 1951).

fellowship of those who respond to the event interpreted through history. The church is not a static entity, a particular structure, but is a given series of occasions: a focusing of past occurrences, present concrete relationships, and future aims. Everything that has happened in this process is integral to our understanding of the nature of the church. Therefore, one cannot really leave the church by leaving a particular community, for one will by his decisions be participating in the church anyway. Therefore Pittenger cautions us that anyone interested in change should remain within the Christian community and recognize its processive nature. We must be faithful yet highly critical of the processive fellowship. The minister, as a participant in the process, should "align himself with whatever makes for wider sharing of goods and greater justice."<sup>70</sup>

If the minister does this latter, then will he or she necessarily be within the process of the institution to which he/she belongs? Can he/she remain loyal to that institution, if his/her local congregation can not align itself with this process? Is the "extremely" sinful congregation aligned with the processive community? What is one's responsibility to this congregation? Here too both Pittenger and Dillistone, while dealing with the category of creation, do not have adequate concepts of the nature of sin and redemption in relationship to the church as an institution. The metaphysic

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<sup>70</sup>Norman Pittenger, *The Christian Church as Social Process* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971).

for Pittenger is such a relatively new one in talking about the church, that it is not yet possible to find the valuational possibilities inherent to the metaphysic itself. His answer is obviously God as open, dynamic and creative love - but what is the ethical and moral content of this love?

*The Church As the World and As the Institution*

At this point the primary statement I wish to make is that the church is made up of humanity - the world, for all of humanity is created to be participants in God's world. At this deepest and most important level, there can be no distinctions between those within and those without. In this sense then, the church is not a group of persons who know they are saved or who know that they have a call behind them, to be identified apart from those who have a call both before and behind them. The church is not a fellowship which transcends the earthly misery, which can do without external expression. The church is not simply a fellowship which needs an external expression alone. Also, the church is not above us while we tarry with an institutional representation, nor is it in the future while we seek to meet it at the end of time.

The church is composed of sinful persons - from pew sitter to travelling bishop - who are deeply in need of forgiveness and who desire spiritual, holistic growth and nurture. In its awful sin the church has its complete identity with the world; the church is the world, for it is composed of worldly

people.

If we retreat from dualism and move to a more holistic understanding of reality, we can only assert that the fickle institution from which we would rather switch than fight is precisely the world in which we have our identity before God and from which we cannot ultimately escape. Because we are social creatures, our religious habits will have various patterns which are inevitable in their existence, but which can always change. The church will always then be an institution. It can be nothing else. The existence of the church totally in the institutions means that God is incarnate - immanent in and through humanity and its changing orders, dealing with sinful beings.

This does not tie God to work through particular given institutions. In the past we have said with the reformers that God does not work through institutions but through committed groups (or individuals) of believers. But when we talk about humanity it is impossible to do so without reference to patterns of social interaction. Therefore God in his freedom may go outside of established patterns, but the new patterns of his incarnate activity will be no less institutional, no more the "real" church.

The church is wholly in this world. It is not a simple community - above, beyond, called, separated - that is pure and without sin. It is the world of institutionalized relationships where the acknowledgment and redemption of sins

find its context in the fulfillment of creation - the image Dei.

*The Minister As Servant With the World*

It is in this world that the minister is sent, as servant with the world before God. The minister as well as the church is not in the world for the world but is with the world before God. The minister's identity is bound with the institution - at times in tension - and always accountable to God. The minister will not find the true church by renouncing his faithless congregation for a smaller and more intimate group. Neither will he encourage the growth of the true church by lifting up a vague ideal of the church before his worldly members. Ministers will only discover what it is to be in ministry as they come to understand their particular relationship with the institutions of which they are a part. They are joint children and sinners before God. They are servants of the incarnation in a particular context.

When we preach on Sunday mornings or engage in committee work and indulge in picnics, the people with whom we deal are not separated according to those within the fellowship and those outside. The "real" church is not those persons who take the "correct" position on the issues. It is not merely a collectivity of ministers and a scattering of "devoted" lay persons.

All creatures with whom we jointly seek forgiveness from the community called church, be it a complex institution

or the smallest growth group. It is this church which is called to be responsive to the incarnation of God and the fulfillment of God's creation.



## CHAPTER 4

MINISTRY AND INSTITUTION IN THE  
THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley's theological concept of the church is decisive for his understanding of the nature and function of ministry, the institutional development of his organizations, and the way in which he dealt with situations of conflict arising during his ministry within the church. In the last chapter we traced through church history the many ways in which persons have understood the church and the relationship of their ministry to the church, and how they brought these understandings to bear upon problems which arose during their historical contexts. This chapter on Wesley does no other than expand in one pastor's life the same thesis in much the same format.

In this project we are concerned with the relationship of ministers to a Methodist annual conference and how they deal with conflict within that conference. It is particularly appropriate to look carefully at the life of John Wesley, who through his own ministry had to deal with this very question: how can I be loyal to a particular Church which desperately needs reform, yet in its institutional framework and leadership resists all such efforts? Because of his concern for this question we can turn to his ministry

for enlightenment. Because he is our ancestral father we can ask further how it was that the structures he built to answer his problem are today at the center of our problem, similar to the one he faced.

It is difficult here to refrain from doing historical rather than theological work. So many fascinating events surround Wesley's life that we are tempted to quote stories from his journal at length or discuss his practice of ministry rather than seriously try to construct his theology of the church and ministry. Instead of constructing a theological outline with which we would supply historical footnotes, however, we will look at some of the critical events during his life and attempt to understand how at these points he worked out his theology of the church and the ministry, and how these bore upon his institutional activity. Where does his theology and practice hold together and where does it break apart?

The first section of this paper will reconstruct Wesley's concept of the church which, like his concepts of everything else, is evolving throughout his ministry. Then we will work at his concept of ministry in as concise a way as possible; we will not look so much for rules and practices except as they bear on our central concern for his theology of ministry. Here we will also discover his concept of ministry for the preacher's needs through the development of the annual conference. Finally, we will work through

several particular conflicts during his life in order to see how these concepts were related, at those particular stages, to the crucial problems at hand. We will then discuss some conclusions about his theology of ministry in relationship to the institution to which he belonged.

## CHURCH AND INSTITUTION IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

### *The Church*

Theologically Wesley was an eclectic in that he read widely among all the literature of the Christian tradition, drawing upon many different sources in working out his understanding of the nature of the church. Often a particular event would occasion the reading of a particular book upon which he elaborated his own understanding of the meaning of the event. At other times the process was the reverse; an unusual book or publication would occasion his attention to a particular occurrence.

As a historian of Christianity, Albert Outler draws attention in an article to the derivative sources of Wesley's concept.<sup>1</sup> From this summary, some other secondary sources, and particularly Wesley's own writings, we will develop below some of his basic concepts of the church,

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Outler, "Do the Methodists Have a Doctrine of the Church?" in Dow Kirpatrick (ed.) *The Doctrine of the Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), p. 15.

1. The church is *visible*. In his sermon "Of the Church," from which we draw much of this discussion, Wesley refers to the various usages of the term "church." Throughout his writings Wesley time and again uses (as we do) the term "church" to mean a variety of things - from a church building to a particular worship service, to a class meeting. But in his sermon, he reaches back to the nineteenth article of the Church of England in referring to the church as "a *visible* (italics mine) congregation of faithful men." There is nothing hidden from the world nor secret about this gathering. The church is fully out in the open as witness to the world.

2. The church is a *congregation of faithful persons*. Here Wesley gave emphasis to the free church tradition of the "gathered people of God." While Wesley speaks of the inclusivity of the church as being all the believers who "call on the name of the Lord," he feels the necessity (as did Calvin) to specify that there is a distinctive faithfulness which does not set some "apart" from the others, but which is known to God as marking those who are justified by their faith through grace and are continuing in the process of sanctification. While Wesley did not insist that all who hear his preaching be "faithful persons" -indeed, his preaching is in part a converting experience - he did insist in the classes that the members be faithful persons intent on the process of perfection, otherwise they would be rejected.

3. The church is *holy*. Wesley says, "The church is called holy, because it is holy, because every member thereof is holy, though in different degrees, as He that called them is holy." In order to belong one must be a believer and must be alive to the work of the grace of God in his or her life.<sup>2</sup>

To those of us acquainted with many "unholy" church members, we can empathize with the difficulty of Wesley's utterance on the "holiness of the church." Is this the invisible church of the elect to which he refers? Is this actually an ideal which he is holding up before us? Or is this the church of the future, the eschatological community to which we owe our allegiance? None of these. The church is called to be holy *now*, in the present; this is not an ideal for Wesley so much as it is the present necessity. Those who believe and are therefore alive to God<sup>3</sup> are members of the church, and it is those persons who are going forth in holiness and perfection.

Therefore, for Wesley these persons are called "to walk,"<sup>4</sup> (1) "with all lowliness," aware of their deep sins and unworthiness, yet also aware of the power of God at work in them; (2) "with humility;" (3) "with patience;" (4) with "longsuffering" and, in a key phrase to be used over and over again, "never overcome of evil, but overcoming evil with

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<sup>2</sup>John Wesley, *Works* (Jackson Edition, 1829-30, reprinted, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), VI, 392, 296.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., VI, 400.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., VI, 397-99.

good;" (5) "forbearing one another in love;" and (6) endeavoring to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

4. The church is *catholic*. This is the other side of the coin from the holiness of the church. The church must be catholic and universal, in that there is one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all. The catholic church is "all the persons in the universe whom God hath so called out of the world as to entitle them to the preceding character." The state or national church then is "the part of this body which inhabits any one kingdom or nation." So while there may only be two or three together, they still constitute the universal church.<sup>5</sup>

The problem here is that the catholic church which emphasizes unity has not easily been the holy church which, in the Protestant tradition, calls for a mission through a renewed church of faithful members. In recent days one could also distinguish the "liberal" by both his catholic attitude and his lack of well-defined faith. The attempt of Wesley is to hold these two aspects of the church together, not so much in tension as in wholeness.

5. The church is *apostolic*. The succession of apostolic doctrine is entrusted not to those who have been handed down the keys to the kingdom in succeeding generations, but to those who have been faithful to the apostolic witness.

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., VI, 394-6.

The ministers in the Church of England, for example, are faithful because they have been ordained; for Wesley, the faithful who receive a special call to preach are then ordained because they have been faithful. The true doctrine of the church through the centuries must be discerned as we discover the faithfulness of its people to the Scripture and the tradition.

6. The church is a *sacramental society*. In Wesley's treatment of baptism his source is his father's *Pious Communicant* and Daniel Brevint's *Christian Sacrament and Sacrifice*.<sup>6</sup> The sacraments are necessary not only as a unifying and outward sign and a sanctifying memorial, but also as a converting event. He stressed the horizontal continuity of the unbroken presence of Christ in his church through the sacraments. It is therefore in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper that we participate time and again in the presence of Christ in the world. It is for this reason that Wesley partook regularly of the bread and wine, linking his inward experience with the catholic community of the church.

7. The church is an *evangelical society*. Preaching is indeed a part, but an important part, of the activity of the church. But preaching is also only a part of the "evangelical activity" of the church. As previously mentioned, the administration of the sacraments was considered to be

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<sup>6</sup>Outler, p. 15.

evangelical, in that it is a converting experience. While preaching is central to the mission work of the church for the Wesleys, there are many other channels of justifying grace.

The nineteenth article states that the preaching of the church must be pure. Wesley correctly calls our attention to the fact that the *Word* is what must be pure. He even goes so far to say that he can put up with wrong opinions and superstitious modes of worship.<sup>7</sup> The Word *can* come even through these provided that there is some kind of preaching and administration of sacraments, and that there is a company of faithful persons present.

The context of this evangelical mission is the sacramental society.<sup>8</sup> Wesley's societies were fixed within the Church of England; the societies did not have the authority to serve the sacraments, which could be received only in the services of the Church of England. So while the church is an evangelical and a sacramental society, and while the church is where two or three are gathered together, Wesley said that only in the larger communion could the sacraments be served, for these are a visible sign of our true unity.

8. The church is a *community of liturgy and devotion*. Wesley was determined that the *Book of Common Prayer* would serve as a guide even for his societies; he would not let his

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<sup>7</sup>Wesley, VI, 397.

<sup>8</sup>Franz Hildebrandt, "The Wesley's Churchmanship," *Drew Gateway*, XXXI (Spring 1961), 149.



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groups get by with "three hymns and a prayer." While he definitely enlarged the body of material available and added new instruments of liturgical practice, such as the use of many hymns and extemporaneous prayers, he still demanded that his groups in their worship and discipline follow a definite order with a variety of liturgical readings.<sup>9</sup>

9. The church has a *form and continuity in history*. The subjective holiness of persons must show fruits in their participation in the objective form of the church. For Wesley the church is defined as a mission to be realized within a form and institution; that is, his societies were not a church in themselves, but were to act with a particular mission within the Anglican perspective of the church as a form and institution.<sup>10</sup>

This is an important concept for us who are wary of the forms of our denominations as products of scientific rationalism, imperial expansion, and the growth of the concept of the competing church. We have also discovered the hard way that too much freedom from form can lead to a rigid kind of conformism, a harsher "deformity." Wesley held to the doctrine of the freedom of God above form to

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<sup>9</sup>In this regard he was following his early training in the Church of England; also, he was influenced by the Catholic Nonjurors (Hickes, Kettlewell, Ken and Nelson) and the Puritan masters of devotion (Scougal and Baxter). CF. Outler, p. 15.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 19.

draw his people together into new forms, but these new forms should still be continuous with the past and through love draw previous forms together in catholic spirit and unity.<sup>11</sup>

*The Societies and Classes*

For Wesley the company of the holy is the *ecclesiola* in *ecclesia*. There was certainly nothing new about small groups within the universal church. But Wesley saw that the uniqueness of his societies was in their position within the Church of England rather than without.

Wesley did not let the societies "do their own thing." They had their definite forms and demanded strict obedience on the part of the members. During a visit of the northern societies and their classes (March 9, 10, and 12, 1747), Wesley urged that it was necessary to purge the classes of evil members. Vain persons are indeed encouraged to attend the evangelical meetings of preaching and administration of the sacraments within the Church, which have to do with the "heart," or the initial process of justification. But only those who have had this experience can participate in the classes, a center for sanctification. The leaders were therefore urged to cut down on the number, using their

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<sup>11</sup>Colin Williams, *John Wesley's Theology Today* (New York; Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 159.

best common sense and honesty.<sup>12</sup>

*An Evolving Conceptualization*

Wesley conceived this mission as an embodiment of the protestant emphasis on renewal through the spoken Word, and the free church emphasis on mission through the discipline of small groups within the Church. While he stressed the catholicity of the church, as we liberals tend to do, unfortunately later he began to emphasize the true church as being, not an organized religious institution, but any group of Christians living spiritually.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly Methodism emerged in the nineteenth century from a society within a church to a branch of the universal church, from an evangelical order to a low-church Protestantism.<sup>14</sup>

MINISTER AND INSTITUTION IN THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN WESLEY

In a similar manner to the way in which Wesley distinguished between the process of justification and the process of sanctification, and between the church as form and institution and the role of his societies as a mission, so I believe that there was a distinction made between the

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<sup>12</sup>Wesley, *Journal* (London: Epworth Press, 1952), III, 184-5 (March 9, 10, 12, 1747).

<sup>13</sup>Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970).

<sup>14</sup>Outler, pp. 20-1.

role and function of the pastor of the Church and that of the preacher in the Methodist connection.

Wesley's concept of ministry was an evolving one, so that it is difficult to summarize as we are wont to do here. The Wesley who beat persons over the heads in Georgia with his high churchmanship was a different Wesley who released his ministers in America years later to form their own communion.

### *The Minister*

1. The minister is a representative called by God and elected by humanity. Wesley basically agreed with Calvin that a congregation with its ordinary call confirms God's extraordinary call. He could not agree with Calvin, however, that the minister was simply a representative of the congregation before God. The freedom of the minister as coming from beyond the local congregation was built into the structure of the preaching mission. Therefore, as Outler put it, "Your pastoral authority is not, therefore, personal . . . nor is it bestowed by the congregation. You are not the employee of the congregation, nor are they your flock, either to be sheered or to furnish lamb chops."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Albert C. Outler, "The Pastoral Office," *Perkins School of Theology Journal*, CVI: 1 (Fall 1962), 7.

On the one hand the minister is not the consensus representative of the congregation before God. God help him who is! He also is not the Shepherd sent directly by God to man with the Word all his own; God help the congregation who entertains such a being! Rather, the minister is a representative of Jesus Christ, the only Shepherd of the sheep, and in this case is limited by the freedom of God to go beyond and around the minister if necessary. The function of the minister, as Outler beautifully put it, is as a "sheep-dog" of the one Great Shepherd.<sup>16</sup>

2. The lay person may receive a call to preach, but he or she cannot administer the sacraments. In keeping with his concept of the church Wesley felt that the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper should remain within the institutional church, as a visible sign of the unity of all Christians. Therefore only the clergy recognized by the national church should administer the elements. If the lay preachers were to administer the sacraments they would be assuming a function which could be a token of disunity and thus lead to separation.

As much as Wesley did not wish that his lay preachers would administer the sacraments, he finally had to consent to this at last. Theologically Wesley could not

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

maintain a separation between the function of preaching the Word and that of administering the sacraments, particularly if the sacraments were to have a converting as well as sanctifying significance.

3. Ordination is not a sacrament but a divine institution. The minister does not receive a special transmission of grace, making him something completely different from the ordinary believer. But the minister carries a particular commission to perform certain functions.<sup>17</sup> The important aspect of the minister for Wesley is the fact that he or she is called to act in mission. This is in keeping with his concept of the church within the church as being a peculiar act of mission. We will deal more with the evolution of his understanding of ordination in the following section.

From early on Wesley held quite clearly that the minister cannot affect the validity of the Word and the Sacraments. Therefore his members in the societies should go to church, whether the minister is good or bad. As late as 1766 and later he was saying that "I go to church whether the minister is good or bad, and advise others so to do."<sup>18</sup> But in the 1780's, as his people began to

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<sup>17</sup>A. B. Lawson, *John Wesley and the Christian Ministry* (London: SPCK, 1963), p. 92.

<sup>18</sup>John Wesley, *Letters* (London: Epworth Press 1931), V, 23.

complain more emphatically about the pastors in their local churches in England, Wesley said, "If the minister should begin to rail at and ridicule Christian perfection, they should quietly and silently go out of the church, yet attend it again at the next opportunity."<sup>19</sup> During 1786 he expressed even more caution about hearing bad preaching.<sup>20</sup> The person of the minister could not affect the sacrament, but to Wesley the person seemed easily to get in the way of the Word of God.

The minister should preach and declare the whole Gospel, from justification all the way through sanctification to perfection. As Wesley said in his "Thoughts Concerning Gospel Ministers," the gospel minister must preach Christ dying for us and living in us.<sup>21</sup>

5. The whole concept of the church is tied into the process of the work of grace, and so is the work of the minister. But for the one minister to do this complete work he/she must have access to the functions of the entire church, that is, to the work of nurture, discipline, teaching, and administration of the sacraments. The preacher

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., VII, 99.

<sup>20</sup>Ellis Herbert Nygren, "John Wesley's Changing Concept of the Ministry," *Religion in Life*, XXI:2 (Spring 1962), 269ff.

<sup>21</sup>Wesley, *Works*, X, 455-6.

who converts must also be the pastor who sustains and the priest who nourishes.

The minister must care for his entire congregation, not only as a whole, but for each particular person.<sup>22</sup> The ministers will have to give account for their guidance of every particular soul in the congregation. The congregation in turn is to submit to their guide in all things which are indifferent to the direct determination of the will of God.<sup>23</sup> The minister must be careful to explore the possibilities of our actions in order to enable us to determine what is the best course of action.

6. The minister must care for his own soul. He talks about the gifts of God and the grace of God, and calls on the minister to make of his private and public life an example to his flock of devotion to God. As a steward of the mysteries of God, the minister is in fact a co-creator of heaven and earth with God.<sup>24</sup> Wesley places a great emphasis upon living the complete, holistic life, bringing all of it under the scrutiny of a life lived before God.

7. The ministry may not be a sacred order, but it has its functional order which it must maintain and regulate. There was a specific function for each assignment in the Methodist economy of ministry. Wesley recognized the

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., vii, 108-116 (Sermon 97).

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, x, 281-8.



necessity for clear lines of command and responsibility if order and discipline was to be maintained. Wesley attributed the gradual decay of the work of God in Dublin to the leaders who had assumed more than they should have. In 1771 Wesley tells what leaders can and can't do in order to demonstrate their restricted authority. He states that the order of ministry in the Methodist discipline is thus: the assistant (later superintendent), the preacher, the stewards, the leaders, the people. He adds that each must keep its own place and all move together in harmony and love, holding the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace."<sup>25</sup> This ordering of the ministry, each with its own place, sounds almost Thomistic, and certainly episcopal.

#### *The Annual Conference*

In looking at Methodist institutions we recognize the annual conference as one of the most important formations in that it supplies the backbone to the entire Methodist structure. It has evolved tremendously from that first gathering in London, and in some respects we have strayed from Wesley's original intent. The necessity of the conference was well-founded in Wesley's mind: "that my fellow-laborers and I may more effectually assist each other, to save our own souls and those who hear us."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Wesley, *Journal*, V, 404ff (April 1, 2, 3, 1771).

<sup>26</sup>Cf. Wesley, *Works*, VII, 278; XIII, 248, 155, 156, 315.

The annual conference today is mostly concerned with institutional maintenance, and to some extent with how we are to go about saving other souls and living the perfect life. But it has greatly forsaken the primary function of looking at the souls of its own ministers, except in a perfunctory manner. There is certainly the opportunity today to engage in the discussion of one another's souls in relationship to their ministries, but it is generally not formalized into some regular, disciplined experiences which would be more characteristic of Wesley's conference.

Also, while doctrine and issues are brought to the fore at the General Conference quadrennially, they are often on the backburners of the local annual conferences. This would be abhorrent to Wesley, who spent great portions of time in hammering out through intensive questioning the great issues of doctrine over and over again, even in his local gatherings of preachers. The annual conferences today lose much of their function when they completely delegate their responsibility for such work to the General Conference.

Wesley was the primary source of authority in relationship to the formation and regularization of the Conference. He said that he "desired some of (his) preachers to advise, not control (him). They had no power but what (he) exercised through them." Wesley said that God had given him this power.<sup>27</sup> Wesley felt this control was his

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<sup>27</sup>Wesley, *Letters* VI, 376 (January 1780 to Thomas Taylor).

alone, or God acting through him; therefore he could kick out any preacher who did not follow him. Wesley's preachers were to act under him and not on their own.<sup>28</sup>

Wesley could do this because of the extraordinary call which he felt to be his; he was a presbyter, but a special kind of presbyter who had the power to regulate the preachers under his guidance. With the growth of the conference, however, Wesley began to lose such a tight control and recognized the necessity of being more political and cautious in his directives. In a letter to Christopher Hopper in regard to permitting a person to preach as a local preacher, Wesley said, "I will not run my head against all the conference by reversing what they have already determined. I cannot, with either decency or prudence, go any further yet."<sup>29</sup> This is one of the few occasions later in his career in which Wesley indicated the growing power of the conference over him.

The conference then was an opportunity for the ministers to speak with Wesley, their spiritual head, about the state of their own souls in relationship to their ministry. They also discussed the work of their ministry individually and as a group. Important issues of doctrine as well as specific crises were plowed up and intensively

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<sup>28</sup>Wesley, *Works*, XIII, (Letter to Mr.        DCCCLXXXVI), 139-40.

<sup>29</sup>Wesley, *Letters*, VII, 287 (August 1785).

worked through. Wesley desired to maintain his authority over the ministers: (1) because he was their necessary link to the Church of England; (2) because he therefore desired unity rather than separation; (3) because he rightly felt the awful responsibility to direct the activity of the evangelical mission as it attempted to renew by the means of grace the institution to which it belonged.

#### THE THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY AND INSTITUTION IN SEVERAL CONFLICTS

Now we will look at six specific points during Wesley's life when we see his theology of ministry and ecclesiology undergoing crucial alterations. We will briefly describe each event, offer his ecclesiology and pastoral theology, and state the specific difficulties which he seemed to be having. Throughout we will be bearing in mind his relationship to his own institution the Church of England.

##### *Six Transitions in Wesley's Thought*

1. The early Wesley was strictly a Church of England minister. He was legally-minded and worked deontological havoc upon those under his care, including most of all himself. His activity in Georgia is indicative of the way in which he tried to force his churchmanship upon his members. It is said that he expected the

people in Savannah to be as strict and pious as he was; he therefore kept "mountains of statistics" about their churchly habits, as well as about his own.<sup>30</sup>

His concept of the church stressed the National Church of England as the only Church, the via media between the Roman Church and the Reformed Churches. In a sense it was the sole representative of the heavenly church and to it was required strict obedience by all of the Christian community.

Wesley's concept of the ministry was also strictly high church, with three orders and the pastor as the ruler over the lives of the flock. He felt that his calling was unique and often similar to the martyrs. He stressed the faithfulness of the minister to the church, and the strict necessity to preach the pure Word and purely to administer the Sacraments.

His problem was that, in his sole reliance upon obedience to the institutional form of the Church of England, he discounted the freedom of God to go beyond and around him in his ministry as a representative of the Church. This is a position which he never completely abandoned, but to which he became motivated from a completely different standpoint.

2. Wesley's decision not to become pastor at

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<sup>30</sup>Baker, p. 45.

Epworth is not well-known, but is certainly pertinent to our topic of the minister in his relationship to the institutional church. Wesley certainly believed that to be in ministry meant to be a pastor of a local congregation.<sup>31</sup> Yet he also felt that his call to the ministry was an extraordinary call, which led to his later assertion that the world was his parish, rather than one particular community.

Wesley's concept of the church broadened to include persons who did not necessarily belong to one particular national church. While Samuel and Susannah took the side of institutional catholicity, Wesley began to claim a liberty of conscienceness in this authoritarian world.<sup>32</sup> He struggled to decide if his loyalty to the institutional church necessitated a ministry with the framework of the local parish. He was not sure about the new form of his extraordinary call.

3. The experience in Georgia prepared Wesley for the renewing experience symbolized by Aldersgate. In this experience in Georgia his concept of the church and its order reached a state of flux. The church became less important as he searched his soul for traces of his own spirituality. At this point, discipline and devotion,

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<sup>31</sup>Wesley, *Letters*, II, 233ff.

<sup>32</sup>Baker, p. 37. Cf. Wesley *Letters*, VIII, 268-9: also a letter to his father, dated 10 December 1734.

which had been so important for his ministry in the Church of England, became "the fruits rather than the roots" of salvation.<sup>33</sup>

His concept of ministry began to be oriented toward the roots of people's lives, rather than at the statistics. At this point Wesley turned to the essentiality of the preaching of the Word and the importance of justification by faith as requisite to living spiritually. He exercised this ministry both by the organization of lay helpers and later lay preachers and by the organization of the societies, classes and bands within the Church for the purposes of sanctification.

The problem which begins to emerge theologically is in the relationship of the means of grace in justification and the means of grace in sanctification. This develops into the practical problem of the relationship between the preaching services and the societies, and between the preachers and the pastors, all within the framework of the Church of England.

In regard to separation from the Church of England, Wesley urged that the people should be obedient to the bishops in all things indifferent to God. But whatever is done should be to the glory of God.

#### 4. The influence of antiquity through King and

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<sup>33</sup>Baker, 54ff.

Stillingfleet. As the Methodist societies developed and became a force with which to be reckoned within the church, Wesley had to work out an apologia for his work. While Wesley developed a broad concept of the church in terms of the faithful people, or the true believers, he began to see his societies as "God's last chance of repentance, a faithful remnant."<sup>34</sup> With this concept of "the church within the church" developing, he had to decide through the pressure of his own members and the Church itself what justified their continuation within the Church. Wesley worked out his concept of ministry with reference to King and Stillingfleet. King writes that bishop and presbyter are of one order, and thereby Wesley justified his ordination (as a presbyter) of some of his lay preachers.

In regard to the Church of England, Wesley followed Stillingfleet more than King in saying that schism is not evil in and of itself, but that we must look at the grounds for schism. Corruption in a segment of the established church is not grounds for separation from the church, but rather we should stay in the church and change the segment or root it out. Corruption in doctrine or practice actually confessed by the whole church and its leaders is grounds for schism, which must be taken very, very seriously.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 101

<sup>35</sup>Lawson, pp. 47-62.



While many of the practices of the church seemed to be reprehensible to Wesley, his failure to find errors in her doctrine above all kept him within the institutional church. The question now becomes, is Wesley providing the basis for separating his societies within the Church de facto, rather than without the Church, de jure?

5. Wesley continues to struggle within the Church. Wesley tried both to respond to the Word of God where he found it beckoning him in society at the point of need, and to the necessity to stay within the historical Church. He therefore responded to two views of the church: as a historical institution to be preserved through time, and as a fellowship of believers, a faithful few concerned with a particular mission. He held a catholic view of the church, influenced by Richard Baxter, in which the church contains all sincere Christians, whatever their polity. He also tried to deal with his particular body of believers within his institution by developing the societies within the Church to reform it. He knew that reform would not occur if the societies were to pull away from the institutional Church, and likewise that the societies would probably lose their own reason for being.

The problem was that the societies in their ministry did indeed begin to pull away from the Church, transforming his evangelical church within the sacramental institution into a missionary church performing its own

sacramental functions.<sup>36</sup> One reason for this was his members' increasing disregard for the preaching and work of the clergy of the Church of England. How should we deal with clergy who refuse to reform?

This question is pertinent as subordinates deal with leaders who do not reform the institution in the directions thought necessary. Wesley always encouraged his members to work with these clergymen. In his "Reasons Against A Separation from the Church," he said that these clergy are either friends to the truth, or neutral, or enemies. If they are friends, we should do everything we can to increase their goodwill to it. If they are neutral, we should "give their neutrality the right turn, that it may change into love rather than hatred." If they are enemies, we should not despair of lessening their prejudice. We should try over and over again, employing all prayer and care, to overcome evil with good. Concerning the Church itself, he said that we should never make its blemishes a matter of diversion, but rather of solemn sorrow before God. It is "expedient . . . that we should be tender of the Church to which we belong."<sup>37</sup>

6. Finally, to some extent Wesley began to accept the movement of his societies toward their own status as a church. Wesley defined the true church not so much as an

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<sup>36</sup>Baker, pp. 158 ff.

<sup>37</sup>Wesley, *Works* XIII, 175-8, 225 ff.

organized religious institution as rather any group of Christians living spiritually.

While Wesley tried to maintain his loyalty to the Church of England, his loyalty to his mission was above that to the institution, and this motive alone may be the cause for the piecemeal separation of the Methodists from the Church.<sup>38</sup>

Yet in his sermon on the ministerial office, Wesley made it clear that there could be no priesthood without historical connection with the work of the Spirit of God within the church. But his broadening concept of the church along with the necessary cases of ordination (in America, Scotland, and England) led the societies toward the final resolution of separation from the Church.

#### *A Practical and Theological Problem*

Wesley worked out his concept of ministry along with his concept of the church in the crucible of his experience of the needs of people for the work of the grace of God. While his concept of the "church within the church" is used successfully as a means even today of revitalizing church life while keeping intact its responsibility of historical continuity, it does not easily maintain itself within its parent institution.

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<sup>38</sup>Baker, pp. 283, 298.

The problem is partially sociological: the need of the mission to sustain itself through time. But the problem is also theological: the societies developed a following all their own, apart from the institution which turned persons off in the beginning. Yet they were not able to administer the sacraments. The societies actually took over the functions of the institution in terms of justification by grace and sanctification. In doing so, the societies did not as much revitalize the institution as present an alternative to the institution, which in the process also became institutionalized.

How can we develop a theology of the institution which does justice to the institution itself and doesn't merely present another alternative structure? Can the institution ever itself, in and of itself, become a nexus for the working out of the means of grace? For Wesley the Conference itself is a means of grace. How can we relate our ministry to it so that we fulfill its possibilities?

## CHAPTER 5

## SUGGESTIONS FROM PASTORS WHO HAVE LEFT THE MINISTRY

It seems ironical that those who have left the ministry can tell us as much about the present state of the ministry as those who are still inside the institutional church. Yet if we would listen to those who have left for other professional jobs, we could learn a great deal about the church and its ministry - its strengths and potential as well as its failures. Recent studies of denominational ministry typically conclude that the pastors who have left the professional ministry express views and concerns similar to those felt by ministers serving pastorates.

In this chapter I thought it would be beneficial to look at the similarities between pastors who have left the ministry and the ministers who have left the Mississippi Annual Conference. We recall that the ministers who have left the Conference have not left the ministry. Yet some of their reasons for leaving the Mississippi Conference may be comparable to reasons given by ministers in the United States for leaving the ministry.

Still there are many similarities which will become evident as this comparison progresses. There are the personal and family problems related to ministry. There are the moments of particular crises which evoke the

reflection and final decisions to leave the ministry or to change locales. There is the theological understanding of the roles of the church and its ministers, and the difficulty of fulfilling these roles. Finally, there is the relationship of the minister to his or her institutional structures and reference systems, and how he/she reacts to the pressures of these institutions.

Here we will first look briefly at the functional factors related to the ministers who have left the ministry. Then we will see how these are related to their theology of church and ministry. Finally, we will anticipate the following chapter by seeing how our reaction to their theology can be useful to this study, and will anticipate the last section by seeing what practical points of help these studies can give us as we seek answers to the problems facing the Mississippi ministry.

#### THEIR REASONS FOR LEAVING

##### *Historical Overview*

It would be terribly amiss if we were to neglect the historical perspective of our study relative to the twentieth century church in the United States. Therefore before we profile the ministers who have left in the past decade, we will look at three periods in the history of the church and its ministry. John E. Biersdorf gives us three "snapshots" which are helpful in locating the

important drifts of the church in our century.<sup>1</sup> The first picture is of the church around 1934.<sup>2</sup> Following the depression and antecedent to WW II there was a general erosion of traditional Christian beliefs. Concurrently the church was being displaced as the central institution by governmental programs, secular agencies, and other private organizations. There was also increasing secular competition for performance of tasks which had once belonged only to the minister. Finally, there were too many ministers for the number of churches, with the resultant low salaries and difficult deployment.

The end of WW II brought a cultural explosion and a burst of economic activity. The expansion of the cities and the tremendous population growth led to the development of suburbia. For the church these new communities presented much potential for expansion and development. We well remember our denominations shifting ministers around to suit the best men to the "high potential churches." Therefore there was a rise in the status of clergymen as these new positions needed to be filled.

Indeed, by 1960 there seemed to be too few ministers. Along with the development of the suburban pastorate many

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<sup>1</sup>John E. Biersdorf, "Crisis in the Ministry." *IDOC INTERNATIONAL*, North American Edition, No. 24 (April 25, 1956), 4-22,

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp 4 ff.

positions opened for pastors to study further and become teachers in the seminaries of the denominations. During this period schools which lured the best ministers away from the church for teaching posts constantly battled the denominational leaders who needed these persons to fill pastorates. Concurrently the growth of many executive positions in the denomination lured ministers from the trials of the local pastorate.

By 1960<sup>3</sup> the problem of specialization and role confusion was becoming persistent. Joseph Sittler published "The Maceration of the Minister," and Samuel Blizzard, "the Minister's Dilemma," the latter demonstrating how strains in the system were producing strains in the minister's role. The minister was torn between what he really wanted to do and what he felt that he had to do. The period is capped by Niebuhr's study of the ministry, which found that the local pastor was in effect a "pastoral director," executing the multifaceted work of his organization from his office (rather than from his study).

The cultural milieu and the events of the 1960's had their impact on the church. Beliefs once again eroded with the death of God controversy and the *Honest To God* and *Secular City* debates. There was concurrently an erosion

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 7 ff.



of faithfulness in the local church, witnessed by writings about "comfortable pews" and "suburban captivity." The authority and status of the minister again declined. Especially the ministry of the local pastorate came under intense fire. No seminary student worth his salt would consider the local pastorate, but instead desired to forge "new and creative" ministries.

The institutional church was supposed to be passé and appeared to be so with its steady decline in membership and budgets. The minister was continually confused in regard to roles and expectations. Salaries in the average church remained rather low and therefore provided a point of stress.<sup>4</sup> By the 1970's Biersdorf states that the recent polarization had turned into paranoia, a pervasive distrust among persons and groups.

Most of these studies of the vanishing ministers were done during the last part of this latter period, around 1971. About the last four or five years the winds of change have been blowing again, although the direction is still difficult to discern. While liberal churches are still slowly declining in membership, conservative churches appear to be growing. The youth group for the most part are not the social reactionaries bearing signs, but Bible-study-groups enclaves singing fundamentalist rock musicals.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 11ff.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

Today seminary students are renewing their interest in the parish ministry, with resulting placement problems for overflowing conferences.

With all of these changes, we must remember that those pastors who left the ministry and the Conference, the two groups whom we are studying, did so during the previous period of the sixties. Since then ministers have continued to leave the Mississippi Conference. Whether ministers still are leaving the ministry at this point is too early to tell.

*Profile of Those Who Left*

Who are these ministers and why are they leaving? Their reasons depend upon many different factors: if they are Roman Catholic, then they may disagree with the celibacy policy; if they are from a presbyterian or congregational call system, they may be leaving because they could not find another job. If they are Methodist, it may be the failure of efforts at church renewal.<sup>6</sup> Some ministers felt that their freedom to speak out was curtailed; others were overcome by pressures from their constituents on the one side and their supervisors on the other. Hadden explicitly points us to the clergy-laity gap in beliefs and goals. For some pastors there was a personal loss of

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<sup>6</sup>Laile E. Bartlett, *The Vanishing Parson* (Boston; Beacon Press, 1971), pp. 24ff.

clarity in role definition coupled with a heavy sense of the irrelevancy of the church.<sup>7</sup>

In the opening chapter of the United Church of Christ study there is a fascinating list of responses given by ex-pastors to the question, "Why did they leave?" Here we have some of the less-catalogued replies. One person said that he left because he found no power in the institutional church, only lonely individuals. Another said that the people outside the church were "more real." One of the most significant findings was that the ex-pastors and the pastors nearby said the same things concerning the ministry and the church. The only difference was that the ex-pastors were angrier and less hopeful about the church as an institution in general.<sup>8</sup>

The Mississippi ministers in their responses indicated a similar idealism about the church and their ministry. Yet a high percentage of them also indicated that they had seriously considered leaving the Conference.<sup>9</sup> A 1970 Episcopal Church study revealed that 50% of the parish

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Gerald John Jud, Edgar Mills and Genevieve Walters Burch, *Ex-Pastors: Why Men Leave the Ministry* (Philadelphia: United Church of Christ, 1970), pp. 3-9. The pastors generally were very idealistic. However, when it came to the administrators, the pastors were angrier at them than were the ex-pastors! (p. 28).

<sup>9</sup> We recall that a similar percentage of the current seminary students were also thinking about changing conferences.

have seriously considered or are considering leaving the ministry, while another 38% would like to move to another parish.<sup>10</sup> This desire to leave a conference or parish, rather than to dropout completely, is confirmed by the UCC study in which the key to the crisis in their ministry was not a "dropout" problem, but rather a mobility and morale problem. Sluggish placement had led to sinking morale and therefore some ministers decided to dropout.<sup>11</sup> In this sense then the Mississippi ministers who leave the Conference may be expressing some of the same tensions and characteristics as those who are dropping out of other denominations.

In a study of the Central Texas Conference of the United Methodist Church it was found that in one decade forty persons had left the ministry entirely and fifty-four had transferred to other conferences. The writer reported that the former group left simply because they didn't like their work, and not because of the conventional reasons mentioned above. The latter group left the Conference because of the lack of opportunities within the Conference and the poor appointment system. They were not as discouraged with the institutional church as they were unhappy with the particular part of the institution to which they belonged.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Bartlett, p. 44

<sup>11</sup>Jud, p. 59.

<sup>12</sup>Reported by Thomas B. Tribble, "Reasons Men Give For Leaving," *Christian Advocate* (December 25, 1969) 9-10 Interestingly, some of the Mississippi ministers who left the Conference found "their "Opportunity" in the Central Texas Conference and stayed there.

In the following sections we will explore in more detail the major reasons why pastors have chosen to leave the ministry. Most studies work through these major factors without profiling the many complex characteristics of the persons who leave.<sup>13</sup> The "ex-s" are not villains, but actually value their call to be in ministry. They typically broaden their concepts of ministry to include their new work. The ex-pastors in the UCC study were more educated than the pastors, with more hours of study in the social sciences and the humanities. As in my study of Mississippi ministers, both groups agreed that preaching and counseling were the most enjoyable activities, while meetings, programming and official duties were least important. Also as in my study, the ex-pastors overall generally ranked "community activity" slightly higher than the pastors.

The ex-pastors appeared to be more ecumenical. They were more likely to attend seminaries of other denominations and demonstrated much greater interdenominational mobility. But in their local churches they were much less optimistic about making a difference in their ministries, and therefore experienced more rapid job changes than did the pastors.

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<sup>13</sup>The UCC study is unique and the following paragraph reports some of their findings. (Jud, pp. 39-49).

*Sociological Factors*

There is much more that could be said about the ex-pastors of the United States. Rather than rambling through many more characteristics, however, we will now try to group them for a functional analysis into sociological and psychological factors. We will find much overlapping material here, and we should find roots having theological consequences as we discover basic attitudes, interests and responses to critical situations.

*Family's Relationship to Ministry.* The first sociological factor which we will consider is the strain in family life and its relationship to the church and ministry. The ex-pastors of the UCC reported that the third primary reason for leaving the ministry had to do with problems of wife and children. They rated their wives extremely high in regard to their supportive function, but said that this did not strengthen their occupational commitment,<sup>14</sup> implying a negative overtone. Mills said that "family problems" are an important contextual factor in commitment to the ministry, a problem compounded by the sociocultural norm of the "total exemplary status of the minister."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Jud, 50, 53.

<sup>15</sup>Edgar W. Mills, "Career Change in the Protestant Ministry," *Ministry Studies*, III: 1 (May 1969), 17-18.

The ministers who left Mississippi generally did not report any family difficulties, although a significant number did leave for "personal" reasons which may or may not have involved family concerns. However, sources which led to the family problems of those leaving the ministry may be involved in the decisions of the ministers who leave Mississippi. One source of this problem, already mentioned by Mills above, is the fishbowl position of the minister and his or her family. This attempt to maintain an image of perfection is directly in functional conflict with the "suffering servant" role expectation of the minister, who forsakes the family to do God's will.<sup>16</sup> The most common problem of the family reported by the UCC expastors was the wife's role dissatisfaction.<sup>17</sup>

The image is also prevalent of the minister who is married to the church - even in Protestant and Free traditions.<sup>18</sup> The feminine church as the "Bride of Christ" is easily confused with the all-powerful masculine church served by the nonmasculine minister. These sexist images have distorted the culture's psychological profile of the minister, who in turn expresses this tension within the family, to whom he/she turns for support. The image of the

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<sup>16</sup>Jud, pp. 87-8.      <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>18</sup>In this tradition actually there is a double marriage: to the church and to the family. Neither can be divorced.

minister also tends to blend with the image of the church, and his or her job definition is often blurred and vague. This is one primary factor in his being overworked. If the minister has internalized these role expectations, then he will actually allow himself to be submissive to the structural pressures, and will not take charge of his role in the ministry of the church.

Ministerial families complain that there is no one to whom they can turn when problems arise. The supervisors of the ministers are also their employers. One wife said, "Our denomination needs a person, or persons who can be concerned about the minister and his family, rather than the church."<sup>19</sup>

*Institutional Structures.* From the family we turn to the institutional structures, which are often the roots of the families' problems. The UCC study found that the "organizational imperatives" were undermining rather than strengthening the minister's commitment. That commitment erodes as he or she discovers that "he is locked into an institution which he was not trained to manage and whose character he misjudged from the beginning."<sup>20</sup> As Bartlett stated the problem, many ministers found that "institutional predestination" was far worse than some kind of "theological predestination," especially in regard to vertical mobility. There

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<sup>19</sup>Quoted in Bartlett, p. 133.

<sup>20</sup>Jud, p. 93.



were few rungs to the ladder.

In Mills' study of pastors who left parishes for various positions, <sup>21</sup> he found that the pastors who left to take secular jobs were pushed out of the church by conflicts, hopelessness, marital troubles, or health crises. Ministers who advanced up the ladder into executive positions were attracted by good job offers. Pastors who changed churches were both pushed and pulled by restlessness and family needs. Pastors left to attend graduate school when they were divided between the pull from ahead of long-range goals and the push from behind by church conflicts and feelings of hopelessness.<sup>22</sup> The ministers who left Mississippi are a cross between Mills' executives and his pastors, and to a lesser extent the other two types. Many followed up on the lure of better job opportunities ("pull") when they faced conflicts helplessly and hopelessly ("push").

Bartlett says that there is a difference between the institutional focus of the pastor and the cause focus, both for those who leave and for those who stay. A pastor with an institutional focus will stay in if he feels that it's "my church right or wrong;" the one who leaves will

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<sup>21</sup>"Secular:" entered secular jobs; "Pastors:" moved to other churches; "Executives:" moved into ecclesiastical administration; and "Graduate Students:" left to attend school. Mills, pp. 4-8.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-5,

simply look for another institution to which he can attach himself. The pastor with the cause focus will stay in, according to Bartlett, if he feels that the church needs changing and he wants to help. He will leave if his cause is greater for him than the institution, and will seek to minister elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

This is an oversimplification, for it does not describe fully the reasons for pastors to leave, or tell why they would elect to stay in. In the last two chapters we documented many different stances which pastors have taken in relationship to their institutions. Today there has been a shift from an anti-institutionalism to the recognition that institutions are necessary structures for making us more human.<sup>24</sup> The interest now is that of finding the most appropriate ways to integrate the means and the ends. Eugene Kennedy says that we have to look carefully at these structures if our ministry is to be effective. He points out that the weakest individual of a well-integrated community may be healthier than the strongest members of a disintegrating community.<sup>25</sup> Therefore the ministers who left Mississippi may have been some of the most sensitive persons who were suffering the most

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<sup>23</sup>Bartlett, p. 167.

<sup>24</sup>Harvey Seifert, *Reality and Ecstasy* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 142-7. Cf. Eugene Kennedy *The People are the Church* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 105ff.

<sup>25</sup>Kennedy, p. 101.

from a disintegrating religious community. It was not only the ministry but the structures of the church itself which were throwing the system into crisis. The UCC ex-pastors found that the conference of their peers was an unlikely place to discuss professional or personal problems, primarily because the conference comprised a part of the problem itself.<sup>26</sup>

*Ministerial Role Conflict.* Mills' work on types of role conflicts for ministers is a very useful summary for the cross-pressures which we have attempted to describe.<sup>27</sup> First, there is externally structured role conflict, arising from the divergent expectations of significant others in the environment. Hadden documents the clergy-laity gap. Fichter distinguishes between three diverging norms: the bureaucratic norms of superiors, the professional norms of peers, and the popular norms of the laity. There is the well documented conflict between task needs and stabilizing needs, or "to comfort and to challenge." Merton has discussed the difference between cosmopolitan and local imperatives; for the church this translates into denominational (nation) versus local needs. Klausner has suggested that the minister is actually a link between many

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<sup>26</sup>Jud, p. 81

<sup>27</sup>Edgar W. Mills, "Role Conflict Among Clergy," *Ministry Studies*, II: 3-4 (December 1968), pp. 13-15.

different subcultures.

Secondly, Mills distinguishes between internal and external norms. Blizzard's article keynotes this concern. It can also be expressed in terms of Gustafson's "adaptation of ancient truth to contemporary need." The internalized image from within gathered during seminary is at war with the external pressure coming from particularistic values and concerns.

Finally, there is the conflict between internal norms, models and motives. Merton found in his study of physicians that compassionate concern conflicted with emotional detachment (such removal deemed necessary in order to take charge of situations). Ministers likewise find this need to be involved yet be detached enough to take action or enable others to act. The minister also lacks models for ministry today. There is the conflict between the academic educator, the prophetic reformer, the pastoral comforter, and the director of a voluntary association. There is the conflict between the motives of self-denial and loving service,<sup>28</sup> and the motive of achievement.

Most studies agree that the church must as an

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<sup>28</sup>Also described by Strunk as "altruism" which he found as the major motive for ministry. Cf Otto Strunk, "Men, Motives and the Ministry," *Religious Education*, LIV: 5 (1959), 429-434.

institution be concerned with both the challenge and the comforting roles, and that the two are definitely related. Scherer lists four problem areas in putting these two aspects of our functioning church together.<sup>29</sup> The first two he calls an organizational and professional "docetism." We believe in the idea but not enough in the form. The church as a voluntary organization is not sufficiently understood, especially in its role as a change agent. Likewise the minister has an image but does not understand his function. He does not seem to have the private time to put the two together. This is compounded by the other two factors, i.e., the isolation of the parish from other ecclesiastical levels, and an ambiguity of guidance from the national church leaders.

#### *Psychological Factors*

*Quest For Personhood.* Nearly all studies agree that the major factor which finally breaks the pastor's back is a crisis of identity. Bartlett says that ministers are in a quest for personhood, and are in constant conflict between a person-centered religion and institutionalism.<sup>30</sup> His approach calls us to forsake the institutions and

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<sup>29</sup>Ross P. Scherer, "Sources of Role Conflict: Summary of Discussion," *Ministry Studies*: II, 3-4 (December 1968), 41-2.

<sup>30</sup>Bartlett, 30ff.

return to this vital search for all persons. Hadden suggests that the internalization of the crises of meaning and purpose, beliefs, and authority which the church has undergone recently has led the pastors to a crisis of identity. Rather than calling for the defeat of the institution, he suggests that we ask if the present structures are broad enough to work out in support and dialogue these varying beliefs, attitudes and activities.<sup>31</sup> Because the identity of the clergy is related closely to the role of the laity, they must engage one another in the struggles.

The UCC study found that the primary reason for pastors' leaving the ministry was a "sense of personal and professional inadequacy." There many of the structural problems voiced above, but the topping of their dissatisfaction leading to their disaffection came only when this dissatisfaction changed into frustration, when they had completely lost hope that the causes of the problems could be corrected. Dissonance in their systems was not threatening to them so long as hope outweighed frustration; they would then challenge the system rather than change their career. Therefore the study concluded that crucial support functions were needed to help the

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<sup>31</sup>Jeffrey K. Hadden, THE GATHERING STORM IN THE CHURCHES (New York: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 211-223.

minister "nurture hope and manage frustration."<sup>32</sup>

*Satisfaction and Praise.* In his study of career change Mills found that *pastors* who changed churches value praise from their wives first, then from the congregation, or session. The *executives* who were making it in the system, valued praise from the session, then from their wives, and nearly as much from the denominational leaders. Pastors who attended *graduate school* valued more the praise of close friends, while the *seculars* diverged greatly in deciding whose praise they valued the most.

The seculars also expressed the least satisfaction with their jobs. They experienced the largest number of unwelcome surprises during their first year in the ministry. Constantly they felt pressured to compromise. They did not enjoy their organizing responsibilities at all, and had the least amount of visible feedback to evaluate their work. The executives of the denomination were the most satisfied at every point. The Mississippi ministers who left were generally satisfied on the above points, except in terms of feedback, which for them was more a conference related than a church-related problem. The feedback which they received was generally negative.

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<sup>32</sup>Jud, pp. 50, 52 and 106-7. Eugene Kennedy laments that many leader support the structure by making out those who leave to be misguided and errant individuals. Cf. Kennedy, p. 92.

*Anticipatory Surrender.* One of the real psychological battles, also a role battle, for those who left Mississippi is in the struggle for a prophetic ministry. The statement of the twenty-eight ministers mentioned in the first chapter was a bold prophetic move whose effects were as alienating as they were transforming. There is the tendency in the 1970's for those liberal moderates who remain in the state's ministry to adopt a kind of "laissez-faire" open-mindedness which does not take a strong position in order to avoid further conflict, keep the peace, and promote compromise within the voluntary institution. Theologically, according to Joseph Hough, Jr., this tendency to "anticipate surrender" by the minister is supported by his/her understanding of the provisionality of humanity's action relative to the will and freedom of God.<sup>33</sup>

#### *Summary of Functional Material*

By way of summary, the functional analysis above demonstrates the complexity of the factors leading any particular pastor to leave the ministry. These forces battle upon and within him/her often for years before the final decision to break. The many frustrations encountered during their first few years in the ministry give way to hopelessness and despair because there is

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<sup>33</sup> Joseph C. Hough, Jr., "Dilemma: The Liberal and the Church," *RES REPUBLICA*, I: 1 (1973), 33-36, 39.



little objective help available in the way of understanding support. While the ministers hesitate to risk themselves in prophetic ministry, they also are unable to confess adequately their needs and problems to supervisors and peers who are linked to the promotional, competitive structure. Within his/her congregation, the minister is both unable structurally to transcend his experience in order to challenge his people, and at the same time he is unable to invest himself professionally in the lives of the people without encountering disturbances within his reference systems. Finally, the ministers are not sure what they think about the church and their ministry. They are confused about the function of the church and the roles which they should be playing.

#### THEIR VIEWS OF CHURCH AND MINISTRY

##### *Their Views of the Church*

Many ex-pastors who have left said that the church is not an institution, but a mission, or a force within the lives of people.<sup>34</sup> Many of the "rebels" who wrote for the collection of biographies put together by Ben Johnson told how they forsook the institutional church for the "real" church. What they actually did was to

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<sup>34</sup>Jud, pp. 3-9.

forsake the formal denominational churches to introduce new structures, or "new wineskins."<sup>35</sup> Yet Johnson himself acknowledged that functionally it was impossible to "go it alone" in the ministry, for where he found "unlimited freedom" he also found "unlimited responsibility."<sup>36</sup> One young minister who formed his own small congregation found that structures were necessary, and suggested that we should also be questioning whether the structure within which we minister is out in the open, capable of self-criticism, and searching to be congruent with Jesus Christ in the world.<sup>37</sup>

Both pastors and ex-pastors seemed to have a very idealistic concept of the church - either as act, or mission, or energizing force. The ex-pastors were unable to sustain their ideals in face of the odds, while the pastors according to the UCC study had "super high" ideals.<sup>38</sup> For some pastors the ideals have been stretched, either in a kind of quasi-liberalism to include all kinds of factors within their churches, or in a rigid conservatism which holds out some kind of vague hope that everyone will finally see the light. This idealistic ecclesiology has not proven effective theologically and functionally for the ministers, whether they feel forced to leave the

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<sup>35</sup> Ben Campbell Johnson, *REBELS IN THE CHURCH* (Waco, TX: Word, 1970), entire.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-4.      <sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp. 23-4

<sup>38</sup> Jud, pp. 12-13.

institutions or decide to "stick it out."

*Their Views of the Ministry*

What is happening in the church is internalized in their concepts of ministry. Those who leave have done so in hopes that their new structures will allow them to unravel gradually their conflicting values and internalized roles. The former pressures have resulted in a kind of ministerial paranoia, or surrender. They hope to have the space and freedom to burst out of these shackles and take charge of their ministry, as co-creators and transformers with God of their environmental structures.

Those who stay within the institutional church likewise feel that they can neither comfort nor challenge, much less do both. Some ministers will cling, as they once did to their mothers, to the stable structures and hinder any kinds of creative changes. Others will simply do the best that they can, as individuals alone before their own congregations. Some ministers will hit upon one issue after another, serving as a thorn in the side of the institution to which they belong. But they will rarely produce effective and lasting change. Others will seek for some support systems, leaning heavily upon spouses and close friends. The constraints upon mutual ministerial confession are death warnings.

## HOW THEY CAN HELP US

We have turned to these pastors who have left because we feel that they have shared similar burdens with all ministers, especially with those who have left the ministry in Mississippi. Here we will summarize and list some positive ways in which they can help us. First we will followup on the implications of the previous paragraphs for a theology of church and ministry. Then we will list some practical points of help which have come out of these studies.

*Theology of Church and Ministry*

*Church As A Redemptive Community.* Bartlett found that many laypersons see the church as a redemptive community; pastors who left the church did so because they did not find this to be the case. The church is indeed a community in which the sins are confessed and forgiven by minister and laity alike.

*Institution As A Means Of Grace.* Eugene Kennedy stresses the importance of the church as institution. "The structures of the church must express the nature of the People of God as a mystery of human relationships. . . ." This mystery is the institution "in which men can find the personal responses which sustain faith and hope." He calls us to open the institution to active participation by

everyone, or they will become estranged from the institution. This is specifically appropriate to the annual conference.<sup>39</sup> Also, Bartlett quotes Emmaus House leaders as saying that we should not "canonize" answers coming from the institutional church, nor should we become "separatists and elitists." Rather we should be free for "responsible experimentation," and open to the past and the possibilities of creative futures.<sup>40</sup>

*Transformative Versus Limited Social Change*

*Morality.* The church is called to a transformative rather than to a limited social change morality.<sup>41</sup> A social change morality results in small decisions which have no future and which are often alienating. The focus is on the present issue and the appropriate response to that issue. The agenda is set for the actor, who frantically scrounges the necessary votes, but who is usually frustrated. A transformative morality moves from "vision to projection" rather than from "issue to rationalization." This leads the pastor to be persistent in his purpose and to consider the broader contexts of his decisions. The person operating from a transformative understanding of moral decision-making can offer an "anticipatory challenge" rather than "surrender." This challenge will consist of

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<sup>39</sup>Kennedy, pp. 145, 170 and 194.

<sup>40</sup>Bartlett, pp. 172, 192. <sup>41</sup>Hough, pp. 36 ff.

both a *confession* of our provisionality before God, and a *profession* that our provisionality also demands a challenge of all things before God, to make them better.

*Church as Center of Conflict and Celebration.*

Dittes suggests that the church be a center for the facing and celebrating of conflict.<sup>42</sup> If both aspects of the "agency/community" role of the minister are at war, then one will always be dominant and the other striving to become manifest. While the "agent" seeks to enhance individuality, the "community" desires to be at one with other organisms. If the church is stressing communion (stable) aspects of experience, then the minister will suppress his agency inclinations, and will be latently discontented. The growing conflict between the established communion patterns and the agency motivations will be resolved by: (1) an impulsive expression of agency, or (2) continuing but restrained expression of agency which do not violate communion. The minister will try to effect agency without sacrificing communion, and will find that the more vigorously he tries to act the more urgently he will search for ties that can bind him or her to others. The minister must then have some support for his actions in times of conflict, and should try to institute structures which can face and celebrate conflict.

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<sup>42</sup>James E. Dittes, "To Accept and To Celebrate Conflict," *Ministry Studies*, II: 3-4 (December 1968), 46

*Church As An Occupational System.* The UCC study states that the church should be considered an "occupational system," with a reciprocity between the parts (ministers and others) and the system (church). We must therefore consider the benefits that the system and its parts share with each other, the power that they have over each other, and the alternative sources of services that the system and its parts have. In a systems approach the entire system functions to be certain that the needs of each of the parts are being met. Needs of the ministers are for training, hiring, work, rewards, and support.<sup>43</sup> A conference which is not meeting these needs must reevaluate its programs for its ministers.

*Ministry as Provisional and as Perfection.* The minister must realize his or her provisionality before God and the Christian community yet must also continue "toward perfection," to borrow a Wesleyan phrase. Seward Hiltner concludes *Ferment in the Ministry* by telling pastors to "forget perfectionism." The ministry "is not an assembly line;" pastors should do well what they can do, and not worry about everything else.<sup>44</sup> At the same time the minister is called to challenge all things, realizing that all

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<sup>43</sup>Jud, pp. 62-89.

<sup>44</sup>Seward Hiltner, *Ferment in the Ministry* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1969), p. 211.

structures and persons are continuing toward perfection.

Ministers have been undercut on two sides. Their status has been downgraded on the one hand, and their needs for personal growth have been denied on the other. Pastors need within the context of the ministering community a revivication of the importance of their own particular ministry, and a realization and acceptance of their needs as persons to grow in grace and strength.

*Community as Agent of Change.* Also, ministers will be agents of change much more effectively as a community than as individuals. As Joseph Hough wrote, "One man can be a prophet, but it takes more than a few prophets to activate a prophetic congregation." The vocational model of ministry, in which a pastor works in his own individual setting, is no longer valid; neither is the withdrawal of small social action groups from the church. The theological integrity of the local congregation is at stake. Can the institution be a base both of mission and of social action and change?<sup>45</sup> The community of *redemption* must also be the community of *creation* - together.

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<sup>45</sup>Hough, p. 40. Ministers need to work together and coordinate their desires for change. 360 sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in Los Angeles left the order together. Their formal statement of withdrawing simultaneously announced the formation of a new secular community committed to Christian service (Bartlett, p. 94). The Mississippi ministers, rather than leaving one by one, would have had a much more powerful impact had they left together and made a similar positive commitment.



*Some Practical Points of Help*

*Recognizing Points of Strain.* Mills points us to two points of strain during the pastor's life: (1) the neophyte who fails to be accepted as a veteran, and (2) the veteran who does not believe that he will ever become a leader.<sup>46</sup> Other studies however, suggest that tension gradually builds during the first few years of the ministry, resulting along the way in numerous points of strain.

*Building Systems of Support.* The UCC study suggested four functions of a support system within a profession: (1) to set standards of behavior; (2) to provide common reference groups; (3) to provide a means of corporate action to keep the occupational system from taking advantage of the group; and (4) to provide emotional support and encouragement. All Methodist conferences would benefit from continuing appraisal according to these functions. The thesis pushed here is that such systems are needed throughout the minister's career, from seminary through retirement.

In an article describing the Inter-Met seminary program in Washington, D.C., Fletcher and Edwards list many things which have been neglected by the denominational seminaries. The most crucial is that the seminaries have not really trained ministers for their work; would-be

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<sup>46</sup>Mills, "Career Change. . . ," p. 19.

pastors have little contact with the church until they finish school. The Inter-Met program attempts throughout to integrate for all its students work in local parishes with support and study groups.<sup>47</sup> Hinson also, along with Fletcher and Edwards, pleads for spiritual formation as an important part of the discipline of the seminary.<sup>48</sup> Ministers often complain that they leave seminary spiritually defunct, far removed from their state of awareness when they entered.

The first year has been a crucial period for the Mississippi minister returning from seminary, although most seem to make the necessary adjustments. Mahon describes a first-year support service for new ministers of the Episcopal Church in a particular area, the "Parish Internship Program." All incoming ministers were serving directly under older pastors, and conferences of small groups were held regularly. In terms of inner conflicts, they discovered that these groups were actually microcosms of the church in conflict. The working out of conflicts

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<sup>47</sup>John C. Fletcher and Tilden H. Edwards, Jr., "Inter-Met: On the Job Theological Education," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXII (March 1971), 21-30.

<sup>48</sup>E. A. Hinson, "Spiritual Formation of the Minister As a Person," *Review and Expositor*, LXX (Winter 1973), 84.

within these groups lent a great deal of understanding and knowledge to the conflicts external and internal within the church.<sup>49</sup>

The following suggestions emphasize the needs of ministers for continuing support:

1. Continuing Education. B. J. Sims reports on one project in which continuing education for ministers actually serves as continuing support. Participants recognized that the person of the minister was a more important focus than any aspect of his work. Their six-week period of work was divided into four components: personal change, theological change, social change, and institutional change. Each minister was enabled to move back from reactor to events in the world, to actor with initiative. The pastors all recognized the need for this period of personal interchange and support.<sup>50</sup>

2. Consulting Advisors. Based on the assumption that a change in an individual minister will only cause role confusion and conflict without a concurrent change in his community of work and life, Anderson suggests that a

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<sup>49</sup>Robert Mahon, "An Example of the Use of Professional Development Groups in Support of New Ministers," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXII (March 1971), 31-38. The UCC study suggests that graduates out of seminary should be evaluated for their potentiality, and that openings should be created which matched their talent with the needs of the conference (Jud, p. 129).

<sup>50</sup>Bennett J. Sims, "Continuing Education as a Peer Support in the Dynamics of Change," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXII (March 1971), 39 ff.

consultant would be invaluable in helping ministers face difficult tasks and manage conflict. This consultant would not be their institutional supervisor to whom they would be responsible. The consultant, funded by the conference, would be available at the call of the ministers to aid them in specific problems in their personal lives and in their ministry.<sup>51</sup> He would be both skilled in personal counseling for pastors and in institutional change within the church, and have a healthy understanding of the relationship between the two. No penalties would be exacted, by the conference or by the church, for use of this consultant. Indeed, the use of the consultant would be an item for praise.

3. Cell groups. The Washington Episcopal Clergy Association was formed out of a desire by the ministers of that area to substitute mutual responsibility and respect for competitive and isolating practices. The pastor who chooses to belong pays fifty dollars annually in dues for that right.<sup>52</sup> While this organization's activities are similar to the Methodist annual conference, it is possible to transfer the suggestion to the needs of our Conference. There the ministers could be divided into small cell groups

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<sup>51</sup>James D. Anderson, "Pastoral Support of Clergy - - - Role Development within Local Congregations," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXII (March 1971) 14.

<sup>52</sup>E. R. Sims, "WECA - A Response to Passivity and Isolation Among Parish Ministers," *Pastoral Psychology*, XXII (March 1971), 48.

which would meet for mutual support and sharing of tasks. Dues collected could go toward retreats, workshops, guest lecturers, etc. Local churches could also share in the dues, emphasizing their support of their clergy and their stake in the supportive ministry.

4. Clergy-Laity Groups. In a recent experiment Higgins and Dittes report that discussions between committed (measured according to their annual financial contribution to the church) laity and their minister can increase their consensus in regard to ministerial role expectations. "This correlation between commitment and change seems to contradict the often assumed correlation between institutional loyalty and resistance to change."<sup>53</sup> While the Methodist Church has its "pastoral relations committee," members of the committee are the same persons who set the salary and make reports to the conference concerning the work of their pastor. The pastor needs groups of laypersons with whom he can talk over problems without having the threat of institutional cleavers hanging over his/her head.

5. Linking Small Churches to Larger Structures. The UCC study suggests that we need to link small churches, which they term "Pastor destroyers," to the larger power structures.<sup>54</sup> It is very true that many Mississippi

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<sup>53</sup>Paul S. Higgins and James E. Dittes, "Change in Laymen's Expectations of the Minister's Roles," *Ministry Studies*, II: 1 (1968), 4.

<sup>54</sup>Jud, p. 123.

ministers started their pastorates in small churches, often isolated from the larger structures. There was very little available support. These churches must be linked to larger churches in nearby towns where the young ministers can have some contact with other ministers and with the life of larger churches.

6. Institutionalizing Conflict Groups. Joseph Hough suggests that hot issues such as "racism" be dealt with by representative, ecumenical groups within the local churches of a given community. The storm center can be kept at the periphery of the institution with a manageable and interested group, yet the group can confront periodically the institutional church and is directly responsible to the institution.<sup>55</sup> This is one method of dealing with conflict within the church which may prove invaluable as a tool for ministers dealing with difficult issues in Mississippi.

*Listening To and Maintaining Contact With Those Who Are Leaving.* Finally, we need to listen to the clergy who are leaving the ministry for their insights into the nature of the church and its ministry. Likewise, in Mississippi we have totally neglected those who have left the Conference. Despite disciplinary requirements, we haven't even kept an adequate list! These persons can provide much helpful information which may support and help change many of our

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<sup>55</sup>Hough, p. 40.

ministers and their churches.

*Summary*

The problems and confusions of professional ministry in the United States are related in many ways to the particular concerns and needs of the clergypersons in Mississippi United Methodism. In working through these difficult issues and concerns, we need to integrate our functional problems with our theology of the church and the ministry. How we understand the church and our ministry in the economy of God will lead us a long way in deciding how we are to function in ministry. Likewise, the ways in which we "do" our ministry will determine in many respects the ways in which we think about it.

We have received pointers which can guide us in our reflection in the next chapter on our theology of church and ministry. We have discovered some concrete suggestions which we can put directly into practice as we make recommendations in the final chapter to the young ministers and their annual Conference.

CHAPTER 6  
TOWARD A "CONTEXTUATING" CONCEPT  
OF CHURCH AND MINISTRY

In the ivory towers of seminaries and universities theological dialogue is often a self-enclosed network of meanings shared by professors and pupils. Somehow students leaving these seminaries must be transformed into pastors leading churches. There they discover entirely new sets of expectations, attitudes and forces pushing and pulling them in hundreds of directions. In this radically different cultural milieu "theology," the glorious achievement of the schools, is squeezed out at first base.

Everyone in the church to varying degrees is responsible for theological reflection. But some persons are, or should be, trained to lead the congregation in realizing the impact of its theological activity - the ethical causes and consequences, the broader dimensions. Theological pluralism places everyone under a cosmic strain; no one is saying the same things about God. Surprisingly the more one reads and studies theology, the less one is able to accept and articulate beliefs to a congregation. Yet pastors even more than their constituents feel the hermeneutical pinch and so often surrender to the most recent theological vogue.



What we do with out theology reflects what we think about the church and the ministry, and consequently affects our actions in the church. Conversely, our activities in the church will evidence, whether we wish them to or not, a terribly confusing smorgasbord of theological meanings. The work of theology is not only to bring thought and action together, but to bring both thought and action together before the will and purpose of God.

Theological reflection must be done in context; thereby we recognize two things about our world. First, the world is processive. Things are constantly changing, never the same from second to second. Even hard rocks are known to be great masses of movement, reacting to earth's atmosphere and rotation. Second, this processive world, at least in the activity of humans, can be understood in contextuality. That is, there are ranges of implications for given series of actions. For example, the context of the action of a pitcher throwing a baseball may effect what happens two hundred feet away in left field. Similarly, but on a broader dimension, the multitudinous spray of aerosal cans in Los Angeles at 6:30 a.m. will directly affect the advance of the Sahelian desert and consequent droughts in Africa.

The world is processive, and there are discoverable contexts to given events. We generally do not think through the contextual ramifications every time we approach a stop

sign on a busy street. But then we may give some thought if there is a dying person with us whom we are rushing to a hospital. This is a simple example of a "holistic" perspective, in which the new context of the action makes us consider a different response.

There is no measuring rod for Christian perfection. Likewise there is no complete set of standards by which to ascertain the theological accuracy of the ministerial activity of the Mississippi Annual Conference. Everyone knows that denominational statistics do not tell the entire story of the work of the churches and their ministry.

Establishing theological categories of evaluation and interpretation is dangerous and must be contextual. Christ is not in all respects the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. God and Christ themselves are changing according to their contextual work in the world.

As we work through our theology of the person, the church and the ministry, our understandings about God will guide our reflection. First God is *immanent* or incarnate in the world. Beginning in the act of creation, then for all time in the act of Christ, God entered into the world and therefore into human existence. Second, God has still been understood somehow as being *transcendent*, apart from creation enough to be free from particular contexts or understandings. Third, God acts in *history*. This is derivative from God's immanence; God is incarnate in the history of creation, the history of human relationships,

the history of the church. Finally, God is bringing history toward an end (telos). This is the *eschatology*, or future reference, suggested by God's transcendence. God is not only above and in creation, but there is movement and purpose to creation, from past to present and future.

This chapter will begin where most of my experience begins - with persons. I believe that how we understand people will in many respect inform our understanding of the nature of the church and our ministry. In light of both our previous work and these four foundations of our understanding of God, we will begin by redefinining it, particularly in regard to the professional ministry of the Mississippi Annual Conference. Finally, because we have discovered in the Mississippi ministry a fundamental conflict between ministers and their institution, we will diagram a theological model for managing this conflict. This reflection will provide our basis for the recommendations to the minister and his institution which follow in the final chapter.

### REDEFINING THE "PERSON"

#### *Individual and Group*

Because the church is made up of many "persons," it is helpful to stop and think who a person is in relationship to God and reality. It seems, however, that there is often very little agreement about this fundamental building

block of the church - the person.

The New Testament gathers before us many different streams of thought about human nature. Some parts of the Scripture know nothing other than persons in community, while other references provide the basis for the idealization of the individual as a self-contained unit. I believe it is fair to say that while the individual person is distinctly valued by the early church, the person is not known to himself or others except as he or she is a part of a Christian community.

Today there are still a variety of expressions about human nature. Some theologians tell us that man or woman is spiritual only when not attached to any other living phenomenon. William James upheld that we experience religion as individuals in solitude; even Alfred North Whitehead has spoken of religion as coming from the experience of "man in his solitariness."

George Herbert Mead and the social-interaction school of psychology during the early 1900's developed the concept of the socially-formed self, which takes its very nature and meaning from other selves. There is no real individual experience, for all we do or think or feel is somehow bound up with our social environment. Christianity could only be conceived as Christian society - persons relating to one another.

Yet this concept of the "person" does not have

directionality (purpose), and does not tell us how persons truly empathize with one another. It does not suggest that we can effectively penetrate another's very being so as to share in constituting that being. We can only rub shoulders as self-contained units of matter interacting with each other.

*Image of God and Immanence With Persons*

Persons are a part of reality, and therefore they experience the processive and contextual nature of reality. As we talked about the constantly changing composition of the rock, so persons are also gathered series of events. Persons as a part of the world are not self-contained, self-sufficient substances, but are actually events in process. Rather than being self-identical through time and space, persons are constantly changing constitutions, differing in time and kind from other persons. We are parts of the whole of reality in which we share and to which we can make our own distinctive contributions, but which we can not distinctly claim as our own individual space and time.

Traditionally in Christianity we talk about persons in terms of being created in the image of God. Although once "fallen" and the image, destroyed, we have been restored to that kind of relationship through God in Christ. In terms of the person in process, we understand the incarnation of God to humanity as placing God here among us, whom we can experience as we experience one another and as we

participate in God's creation.

As we become involved in the transforming process of the reality of God, we become immanent with creation. Persons become deeply a part of our being and we discover our relationship to all creation. As we do this we experience the restoration of our selves in the movement of God in the world. Our image in God is restored in our participation in persons and creation.

### *Self-Transcendence*

Reinhold Niebuhr opened our minds to both the power and the danger of our ability to transcend our situation. While we are immanent with and a part of other persons and creation, we can also climb the mast of the boat and look around at the diversity of the world. But as we approach the "crow's nest" we begin to sway from the turbulence below, become dizzy from the heights, and cling desperately as individuals to the mast. We descend in order to find our roots and support, to maintain contact with (be immanent with) those around us.

### *Evolutionary/Revolutionary Humanity*

We agree that God is incarnate in creation and is therefore incarnate in history. But how should persons participate in history? Some theology would suggest that God as incarnate in history intends for events to "evolve,"

to happen as history opens out before us.

A more transcendent theology might suggest that God in God's freedom chooses to act when and where God will in God's history. In this case, persons could decide to wait and let God do God's work. A more correct interpretation would be for persons to realize that the freedom of God is the basis of their freedom. In this case persons are called to revolutionize history, to question and to change radically all provisional structures and relationships.

What we do know is that persons have a history of interrelationships. They experience the power and presence of God in their given contexts. Sometimes totally creative responses to events are in keeping with the incarnate activity of God. Sometimes routinized acts are necessary. Persons as both immanent and transcendent must be attuned to the presence and activity of God in history.

#### *Holistic and Creative Humanity*

The presence of God in the future calls persons to project the consequences of their actions upon future generations. While the ends of our activity are not the all-determining factors, and while the means and what we do in the present are crucial, there is directionality to the movement of history. The future is a part of our present.

This realization calls us to be holistic in our

activity, that is, to take into account future as well as past possibilities and consequences. It also calls us to be creative, as we think and plan beyond the demands of our present problems.

What is a person? A person is a part of creation and therefore is involved in historical, institutional relationships which deeply affect others. A person can also transcend himself or herself, view the diversity of God's creation, and project into the future holistic and creative visions of humanity's possibilities.

#### REDEFINING THE CHURCH

In this study we have spent many words on the nature of the church. In chapter three we began to describe what the church is like. Here we will develop these insights and those of John Wesley (chapter four)

##### *The Incarnational and Communal Church*

The church has considered itself through history as the incarnating activity of God in the world. As God is incarnate in creation through the event of Christ, so is God incarnate in the church as the institution which acknowledges and supports God's work in creation. The church is wholly in this world and affected by the world, as God is immanent in the world. The church experiences what the world experiences. The church sins



and separates itself from the work of God as does the world.

The church is in communion with the work of God in the world. This is to say that the church realizes the processive character of reality and of God in the world, and seeks to participate in that reality. The church can decide to be involved in a particular context, but as an institution is by its nature involved in many different events.

Because the church is immanent in the world, it seeks to restore persons to their right relationship with God and God's creation. Therefore the church is a healing and comforting organization. It cares deeply and shares in the joys and wounds of all persons.

#### *The Diverse and Plural Church*

The church as a community of persons can transcend its immediate situation to link itself to the events in its context. As the Christian community does this it can see the diversity and plurality of creation, even of Christian groups.

The church will not only "tolerate" different attitudes, but will bring this diverse creation into dialogue and communion before God. The church discovers that the work of God is transcultural, not only in one group within the Mississippi Conference, but also in other groups holding different viewpoints, both within and outside the

Conference.

*The Contextual and Institutional Church*

What we have stressed previously we now confirm: the church which is incarnate is also the contextual church, functioning as an institution in its time. Because the church is a community of relationships, it is then necessarily an institution. As we said earlier, the church is not an idealized community above, beyond, called or separated from the world. It is the world of institutionalized relationships where the acknowledgement and redemption of sins finds its context in the fulfillment of creation. The church in history is institutional, and responsible to the activity of God in its context.

*The Transforming and Fulfilling Church*

The church finally is called to be a community of change in the transformation and fulfillment of creation. Because of its transcendent reference the church can acknowledge conflict and make its body an arena for cultural process and transformation. Because of its immanental reference the church can celebrate this conflict, for the basis of the diversity is the common immanence we share and practice with one another. Another way of saying this is that grace provides the context for judgment. The church is diverse, but not divisive.

The church cannot only respond to conflicts and celebrate its place in the creation, but is also able because of its eschatological understanding of existence to call for newer, transformed values. It can function with purpose toward an end, not only as confessor and repentant, but also as co-creator with God and "professor" of God's intention in the world. There are solid, concrete things to be done, all theologically and functionally linked to this future. And if the world has a future then the church certainly does.

#### REDEFINING THE "MINISTRY"

The minister has also been worked over in this paper. We have criticized many forms throughout yet realized the applicability of those forms to certain contexts. Now we are called to advance further in our understanding of the ministry for our context today.

##### *The Minister With the World*

The ministry has suffered from a lack of identity, as we discussed in the previous chapter. It is coming out of this slump in creative ways, claiming once again its importance as it discovers its tasks in the world.

The minister is a person as defined above, immanent in the world. He or she lives in a particular context and participates in the occurrences of that context. The minister's identity comes from his/her participation in the activity of God in creation.

The minister has a unique vocation which begins in the context of a community. The call may be understood as the minister's movement into the enervating and demanding work of God which is confirmed by the institutional community of Christians responding to this work. Through these persons the minister is given specific tasks. The minister is responsive to the persons within the community and to the creation as a whole, as God works in these persons and all creation. The vocation of the minister means then that there is a specific sphere of operation.

Secondly, the minister does not have to worry about or envy other spheres, for there is enough work to be done in his context. Thirdly, the minister must remain alive to the will and work of God, not being afraid to change spheres if he/she feels that it is God's directing will.

The minister is not the model for the church, and should recognize his/her provisionality before God. On the other hand, the minister must continue toward perfection, seeking always to participate fully in the creative activity of God. The minister before the congregation is neither the law-giver nor the image of God, but is rather the one who participates with others in the work of God, and shares in the fulfillment of the image of God in the community.

The minister therefore like others needs to be supported and helped to grow as a person. He needs the

immanental contact of persons who deeply care about him and his life.

*The Minister Relating to All People*

The minister has sometimes been referred to as one who keeps the peace in the congregation. There are many competing factions and attitudes about the nature of the church. They are factions fighting if manifest and festering if latent or dormant. In an alive church there will be both boy scouts and town toughs, prayer groups and peace groups, unemployed persons and professionals, Bible study groups and baseball teams. How in this world does the minister keep all of these groups together in one community?

When the events become turbulent, what does the minister do? As in the Niebuhrian analogy, does the minister relinquish his/her post in the crow's nest? Does he/she forsake his/her interest in transcending the situation because he/she cannot control the boat? Does the minister simply build bridges of contact? Can he/she merely make sure that people are loving one another and worshipping together even when they will not participate in the same kinds of activities, or even when they refuse to discuss the most troublesome issues?

The minister may provide links between all of these different groups, as along as he/she can encourage these

persons to utilize their ability to transcend their own particular interests in order to discover the needs of possibilities of other persons in the church. The worship service is one method of providing this kind of linkage. Other methods were mentioned in the last chapter and still more will be mentioned in the next. The minister will need to be immanent with these persons, caring for them, at the same time as he/she is challenging them to transcend their particular differences.

*Relating Ministerial Roles to a Tradition*

The minister who realizes that he/she participates in a history will also continually encounter a tradition of expectations about what his role, status and function should be. We have already discussed (chapter 5) the many conflicts which the minister undergoes today.

*Prophet and Priest.* If the primary function of ministry, as we have defined it, is to enable persons to discover and develop their personhood in terms of immanence and history, transcendence and the future, then we can look at some of these historical models in light of this theological redefinition.

For example, while we think of the prophet as the one who verbally proclaims the Word of God in difficult situations about important issues, we also have traditionally recognized the prophet of action as well. The prophet

has traditionally been eschatologically oriented, concerned with future consequences of present actions. The prophet is the one who has radically transcended his situation in order to bring perspective to bear and to place the situation in its context before God.

The priest has been understood as the protector of the flock. He is the immanent participator in the events around him, in persons and in creation. His activity in the work of creation is more likely to be healing than divisive. He sees how the participants in the world become shattered by certain events in their lives, or how the enrichment of self-transcendence can also have its pain as well.

*Evangelist and Organizer.* The minister, especially in Mississippi and other parts of the United States, has been thought of primarily in his evangelical and organizational roles. We have already pointed out some of the difficulties of these conceptions for present ministry (chapter 3). The evangelist today is not the one who brings atheists and other non-believers into the fold of the institution. According to this redefinition he/she is the one who clearly describes to us our responsibility in the ongoing activity and witness of God in our particular contexts. The evangelist operates both within the walls and outside the walls of the church. His concern is as ethical as it is inspirational, as challenging to our function as it is to our faith.

The organizer is no longer the one who erects buildings and presides over their administration, although this may entail part of his/her work. The pastor today also organizes by concretizing our theological evaluation and reflection of our context into specific, recommended patterns of behavior. Governance of an organization includes not only the distribution of material goods, but also the distribution of values among the society. In this regard, the pastor institutes grace; he/she joins in the creative work of God.

*Recent Models of Leadership.* The minister has thought of himself or herself in regard to several models of leadership over the past twenty years. The "authoritarian leader" is the transcendent model. He/she transcends the events and from a distance discloses methods of better organizing our activity and our lives. The leader tends to control, manipulate and monopolize persons and groups, and is most apt to suffer from the heights of pride.

The "facilitator" is an immanental model which empathizes and understands persons, and allows them to understand themselves. It often may lack a transcendent referent, however, and typically does not issue in a purposive direction.

The minister as an "enabler" of persons' activity in the world combines both the transcendent and immanent aspects of existence. He attempted to help others discover



their functions in the activity of God in the world. Immanence with others and creation is combined with transcendence, which encourages us to recognize our diversity and to dialogue responsibly. He helps us realize our context in history and our transformative power to create new futures.

*A Transformative and Cooperative Ministry*

The minister once was encouraged to be the activist who responded to events in his/her situation. He/she was always seeking particular answers, always the gadfly irritating the community. He/she saw his only alternative as being the spiritual comforter who also hindered conflict.

The suggestions of the previous chapter, combined with the idea that there is an eschatological aspect to our ministry, moves us toward a ministry of transformation. Reality and the needs of the world are not only processive, but directional as well. The minister must enable, and sometimes lead his/her congregation into transforming values and functions, rather than simply responding to events.

One way of doing this is by painting visions of what the church can be. Urban Holmes suggests that the minister is really an artist who projects his/her visions of the future onto the paper of today.<sup>1</sup> The artist

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<sup>1</sup>Urban T. Holmes, III, *The Future Shape of Ministry* (New York: Seabury Press, 1971).

transcends his/her context to offer something totally new; yet he/she is responsive to his/her environment and his/her context, responsible for the involvement of his/her vision with the ongoing work of creation.

Finally, the minister cooperates with other ministers and with all persons participating in God's redemption and fulfillment of creation. One minister alone may begin to make inroads, but little will happen unless he can link his work with others, until there is a network of persons instituting the grace of God in the world. The minister needs the support and response of a redeeming and creating community.

In summary, the minister as immanent enabler is with the world before God, and deals with a history of grace and judgment institutionalized in the church. The minister as transcendent leader is a link between many diverse groups within and without the church. Aware of the future of the church and its roles in God's work, the minister offers alternative visions in order to transform the world, and joins with others to bring about the fulfillment of creation.

#### MANAGING CHURCH CONFLICT THEOLOGICALLY

##### *Four Problematical Directions*

In dealing with conflict, the church and the minister must consider both the immanent and historical aspects,

and the transcendent and eschatological aspects, of reality. There are four related dangers which we will now consider.

First, as we have suggested, immanence functions as communion, i.e., our being a part of one another. The minister who would stress only communion, however, without considering the other three aspects of Christian existence, is likely to move beyond communion toward an emphasis on conformity. If immanence requires our conforming to groups or persons' directions in all events, then theologically a panentheistic claim is being made, that all the world enter and become like God; and we would be the ones defining "God." The Christian claim, however, is that God emptied God's self into the world, making possible in all the world's diversity an immanental relationship. We can set up some of the possibilities for an immanental experience, but we can not always demand complete conformity to actions, ideals, etc.

The second danger is the flip side of conformity and relates to transcendence. Transcendence functions to make us aware of our diversity in creation and our role and place in that diversity. If, however, we emphasize radical transcendence alone, without any other theological reference, then our actions are likely to be divisive, resulting in individual or social separateness. So many groups have separated themselves from other institutions, as we have demonstrated, because they let their self-sufficient balloon get away from them. When they landed, they had become an

institution too, with the same distinct problems. Diversity in social groupings is beneficial, but it is not sound to have separate groups claiming self-sufficient and authentic knowledge. Immanence with all persons and all reality is lacking.

Linked to the danger of conformity is the danger of traditionalism. We are called to consider our contexts in history. But to think only of a particular context, especially an ancient context, without looking to the present or the future, is to nurture a traditional outlook no longer appropriate. History is a part of God's activity, and tradition in a good sense is how we appreciate and learn from that history. Traditionalism distorts present and future reality, and demands conformity to particular functions out of context.

The fourth danger is radicalism, linked to the danger of separateness. We see this in the groups who form themselves apart from other persons and seek to change reality without reference to the needs of persons in their context. These groups, carried away by their transcendence and their own knowledge of the future, undermine the import of God's activity in the present by placing all value in the end. They suggest that God does not give value to the present at all, but only to the end, thus making the present merely functional and persons, expendable. The present work then is only a means to an end. To kill persons may in fact be

to work toward some important end.

### *A Theological Model*

If we combine these four foundation stones, with which we have been working, with their appropriate functions and their respective dangers, then we have a model which appears in Figure 1.

In working with this model we sometimes discover that we have to invade the danger area if we are to break up other groups which are already in the danger area. For example, in Mississippi if there is one group within an institution which emphasizes the first two dangers (traditionalism and conformity), then another group may be unsuccessful at operating on the normal level of possibilities. They may have to drop down with the first group into the danger level of the other two functions (separateness and radicalism). But conflict which remains mostly on this danger level for long will not provide the fruits of the four foundations of a Christian existence.

Let us now turn for a final theological look at the Mississippi ministry, those who left and those in the Conference, in terms of our diagram above.

*The Ministers Who Left: The Dangers Of Separation And Radicalism.*

As we have demonstrated in the first chapter, the

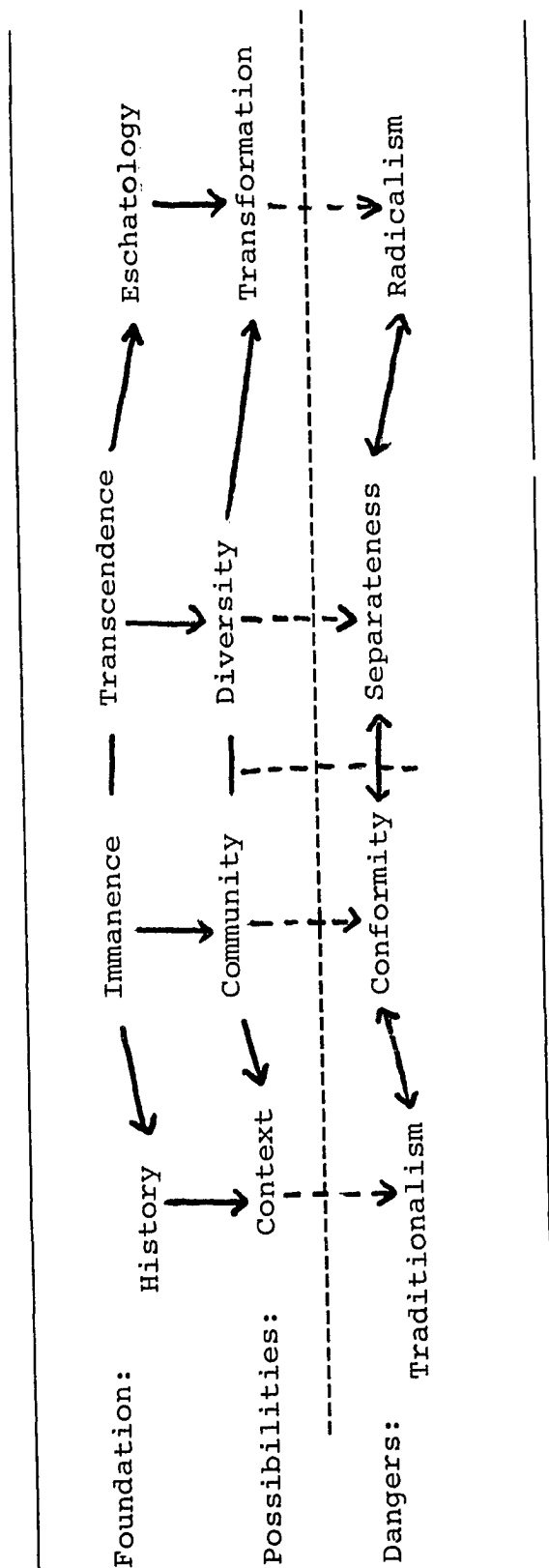


FIGURE 1

ministers who left are not all alike. They differ widely, from the Bible-packing evangelist and Billy Graham-follower to the community organizer and Whiteheadian freak. What most of them commonly felt, in a variety of ways, was the pressure to move from "community" with the other ministers to a kind of enforced "conformity," in which their tendencies toward self-transcendence and social transformation were suppressed. Much of this suppression occurred as sins of omission, as when one minister reported that he could not establish anything constructive without his less-trained replacement ripping his work apart.

The diversity of our world becomes evident as we transcend our situations, and the need for transformation is realized as we encounter the place of God in the future. Our "agency" (from chapter 5) strives to become manifest as we seek to bring about these transformations. When we begin to make such moves, according to Niebuhr, the needs for "community" (or a sense of immanence among the ministers) are especially required. If the conditions for the fulfillment of these needs are a rigid "conformity" to the expectations of the institutional leadership, then the ministers will be faced with a choice. They can further suppress their latent transcendent and eschatological awareness, and thereby conform to the tradition, or they can express their agency in a variety of ways, e.g. by separating themselves from the institution.

The Mississippi ministers who left defined their contextual choice in a similar manner and decided to separate themselves from the institution. While some of these ministers have hoped that their actions might consequentially result in a dialectical movement toward the good for the Conference, most have not had a hopeful vision for their former Conference. Rather than taking radical actions within the Conference, they have directed their hopes and visions toward other institutions.

If the ministers who left could have participated in the Mississippi context without doing homage to an enforced traditionalism, and if they could have enjoyed the support and communion of their peers, the laity and the leadership of the Conference without feeling the necessity to conform to prescribed patterns of ministerial activity, then there is the possibility for many that they would have remained within the institution, the Mississippi Conference.

*The Ministers Within: The Dangers of Conformity and Traditionalism*

In the paragraphs above we have already discussed the problems facing the Conference. The twin dangers for the ministers within the Conference and their leaders are that of "traditionalism," because of their adherence to an older context, and "conformity," because they can only



maintain support by prescribing particular patterns of acceptance.

These ministers have been more likely to ignore the transcendent and future aspects of the nature of God and the church. Certainly some of these ministers have radically confronted the need for acceptance of diversity within the Conference and the need for value transformations. But rather than going the final steps toward the dangers of separateness and radicalism, they have accepted the approved goals and patterns, thereby remaining "within the fold."

#### *Making A Contextual Decision*

There is much more that could be worked out from the diagram (figure 1), but I believe the problem is clearly before us. Obviously, we now ask how one group within an institution can open themselves to diversity and transformation without stooping to conformist and traditionalist demands. How can another group realize their communion needs without feeling the push to separate themselves from the institution?

Of course it will be difficult to hold these theological foundations together within an institution. Some ministers will remain within the institution by being only priests (communion) to the institution. They will then fulfill their agency (chapter 5) needs through mastering

golf and their future-oriented needs through erecting a church building or through a transformationist hobby such as carpentry.

Some ministers will institutionally disconnect themselves, as much as possible, for the work of their own ministry. They will be able to take more risks, but will have to fulfill their communion needs somewhere else than the Conference, such as within a supportive family. But in doing so they will deny their churches the benefit of cooperative ministries with helpful peers.

Whether or not a minister chooses to "make the Conference better" by staying within is a contextual decision with many implications, for his ministry, for the future of the Conference, etc. We have tried in this study to suggest the many possibilities and dangers one must consider. The following chapter will suggest some concrete methods through which the possibilities of a holistic ministry can be enhanced in Mississippi and the dangers curtailed.

## CHAPTER 7

SOME PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR  
MISSISSIPPI PASTORS

The previous chapter has now set the stage for the following suggestions. Because of time and space I will not detail explicitly how each recommendation could be carried out, but I hope that many of these can be considered by the respective groups.

Some of these suggestions are probably already receiving attention within the Conference. I have been away for several years now and am not completely up to date on what is actually being accomplished by the Conference, except according to what would directly affect me. As I write this draft, for example, a leadership conference on the parish ministry will be discussing many of the same needs which I have been studying here. Their six concerns mirror many of the problems to which I have been referring in this project: (1) pastoral charge alignment, (2) deployment of ministerial leadership, (3) ministerial workload, (4) adequate salary support, (5) non-resident and part-time ministerial leadership, especially in the black community, and (6) development of strategies for an effective ministry to people. They have brought in excellent speakers and discussion leaders.<sup>1</sup>

Many programs have been scrapped not because they

are not useful nor workable, but simply because there was not enough initiative to expand the program to other churches or areas. Sometimes neither the leader nor the model church was chosen carefully enough. Often there was not the necessary support to make a particular program idea succeed.

Some of the following suggestions are simply small tasks requiring personal initiative. The fact that they do not succeed at first is no reason to throw the ideas out entirely.

The church is a network of many systems. There consequently will be different contexts for different decisions. A decision made in one area of an institution will effect what happens in another area.

These suggestions listed below are addressed to different components of the system of the Mississippi Conference of the United Methodist Church, including its seminary students and its larger denomination. But what is spoken to one part is actually addressed to all the parts - the system as a whole. We need to realize the contexts of our decisions and act in all parts of the system to put the decisions into fruitful, effective action.

#### TO THE MISSISSIPPI SEMINARY STUDENTS

*Theologize: A Contextual Concept of Church and Ministry*

Not all seminary students will have the opportunity or time systematically to think through their theology of

the church and their ministry, as I have tried to do here. Yet students must try to work and think as holistically and contextually as possible. This means that they will have to take the smattering of various courses from their seminary experiences and attempt to integrate their knowledge with what is happening to them in their parishes. We all know that we ought to do this, but we seldom leave seminary with even a half-way integrated theological vision of what our ministry in the church should be. Perhaps if each of us in seminary can reflect about our ministry in some systematic way, then we can engage in dialogue about the meaning of the church and our ministry.

*Evaluate: The Work of Your Annual Conference*

Unfortunately neither you nor I will probably evaluate the Conference in order to determine if we will become members. But is it is our obligation even while in seminary to get in touch with the institution in which we will be spending probably the remainder of our lives. As we should be in contact and in communion with the members of the Conference, we also need to be able to appraise objectively its various systems - both formal and informal. Everyone of us is a transformer of this institution provided that we understand it and know how it functions.

*Discover: Goals and Means of Continuing Education*

The Mississippi Conference has not had a winning

record in providing opportunities for continuing education nor in providing available resource materials and persons. This will be a concern for joint action as well as for individual initiative. Seminary students returning to the Conference should plan from the beginning to work out means for continuing their education, both with their local churches and with their Conference.

*Develop: Support Groups Among Peers*

One of the reasons so many ministers have left the Conference is because they could not find peer support in times of trouble and great risk. Their communion needs were forsaken by the Conference. If ministers are to transcend their problems and risk creative visions and activities in their churches, they need experiences of support and cooperation, not only from their families, but from their fellow ministers as well. Ministers need persons to whom they can turn for advice without fear of professional loss or reprimand. Young seminary graduates entering the Conference who do not generate such groups will find themselves isolated, in danger of leaving the Conference if not of leaving the ministry entirely.

*Seek: Models of Effective Ministry*

One acute problem in our ministry today is that there are few prominent, solid models of effective parish ministry in the United States. There are some less

conspicuous models within the Conference, however, from which we can learn much about the nature of ministry relative to the Mississippi scene. These models are not always located in the largest churches either.

When we discover these persons, perhaps we should correspond with them. John Wesley said that we should find spiritual (and I would add "functional") leaders whom we can trust with our lives. By writing for aid in our ministry we can develop networks of shared knowledge about the church and the ministry, which would not necessarily have to involve our immediate supervisors. To fail to consult fellow ministers about our ministry is to assume that we are the best in everything and discover that only our pride is standing tall.

*Link: Your Ministry To Those Around You*

Many of us will receive small churches in the country for our first appointments rather than assistantships. If this happens, we are likely to be entirely on our own, except for occasional calls by our superintendents.

We can remedy this situation by initiating lines of communication and links of support with ministers around us. If there is a large city or town church nearby, we can establish contacts with the members of that church. We can meet regularly with the ministers of the nearby church or churches of all denominations for help and support.

If there are no large churches near our appointment, we can still correspond with peers in similar positions. Less occasionally we can meet with our peers from different denominations to share experiences and to help with problems, both ecclesiastical and personal. Our ministry as individuals is apt to be broken and despairing; our ministry together will stir the institutional bones and flesh out its ministry.

#### TO THE MISSISSIPPI ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The Mississippi Conference is not an annual meeting only, but according to the wishes of John Wesley is also the title for a group of preachers. The following suggestions take advantage of the fact that the conference can be a daily affair. And these needs do not all have to be fulfilled in more meetings.

*Correspond: With Your Seminary Students*

Several of the seminary students from the Mississippi Conference have indicated that they have never received any written or verbal correspondence from the Conference since they have been in seminary, except for yearly matters of official business. It is therefore easy for these students to feel as though the Conference and its leadership are little concerned about the progress of the students. The students at Emory indicated more than others that such correspondence had occurred. Students at other seminaries



tend to be left out in the cold.

I believe that most students would enjoy hearing from Conference leaders and members, at least on form letters if not personal stationary! How else can students shape their studies if they do not know what is happening, on a personal basis, within the Conference. The only source of information to date is the Conference weekly newsletter.

*Build: "Connectional" Appointments for First-Year Pastors*

Studies have shown that first-year pastors need channels of support for encouragement, counsel and specific help. Assignments in isolated rural areas may be necessary, but should somehow be connected with experienced pastors who can supplement the individual attention of the district superintendents, who are especially busy with institutional matters. We must remember that it is really during this first adjustment year that the minister's "real" education begins. Wouldn't it make sense to provide tutors and confidants for this learning experience? This is one important way in which we can use our connectional system to a great advantage and nip discouragement about the church and ministry in the bud.

*Promote: Cell Groups of Peers for Personal Growth*

Most groups of ministers come together because one or more felt the need for the group and took the initiative.

The Conference could never force such groups to meet regularly. That would miss the point. However, the Conference could provide guidelines and opportunities for small groups of ministers to come together for sharing, aiding, and personal growth. Wesley found that two or three provided the necessary number for close sharing of personal and ministerial concerns. Without such groups, ministers will continue to feel isolated and threatened, and will continue to leave.

*Create: A Position for a Parish Consultant*

As suggested in chapter four, one way in which to provide personal and ecclesiastical consultation for pastors is through the appointment of a parish consultant, a full-time, skilled minister who would be available for management and personal consultation. He would be paid by the Conference, but would not be another district superintendent, overburdened with institutional reports. He would actually supplement the work of the superintendents, and offer workshops from time to time on the church and the ministry. Such a person would be skilled both in pastoral counseling and in church management and the handling of conflict.

*Provide: Opportunities for Continuing Education and Sabbaticals.*

Most studies suggest that the minister needs to

spend more time in reflection and study about his ministry. They also suggest that this reflection regarding the function of their ministry can take place right in their own setting, where the problems and concerns are explicitly before the group. Pastors desperately need more opportunities to increase their reflective and functional skills. Institutional lures could be made known, in order to attract ministers into such opportunities.

Ministers should also be encouraged to take sabbaticals from their work, for four to six month periods up to one year. Such leaves could be funded by their own church and the Conference together, along with the minister. His time for reflection will be beneficial for his church as well as the ministry of the Conference in Mississippi. This would also regularly open more positions for ministers, as in most Conference there is a growing shortage of positions open for pastors.

*Develop: Cluster Ministries*

There are far too many isolated ministers in the Conference. Small churches, while effective in many ways as small groups, need to be connected with larger churches (or other small churches) for programs, services, etc. The ministers would benefit from this as well as the parishoners. Our Conference has begun to experiment with the cluster concept, and should be encouraged to extend the opportunity

to other churches. The districts are too large to work cooperatively, but smaller groups of churches could easily join together to participate in ministry to their areas.

*Circulate: Functional Designs for Parish and Conflict Management*

Whether or not a parish consultant is hired, the Conference Council on Ministries could periodically issue design sheets for problems in church management and the handling of conflict. This is one form of continuing education which has been overlooked. Many ministers are often in a quandary over problems which they face in their parishes. Their correspondence with the Conference Council could issue in fruitful suggestions circulated through the Conference in general. These designs would not be requirements, but would be possibilities for the creative and imaginative pastors.

*Institutionalize: Conference Conflict*

Most of the Methodist ministers in the Conference felt that the major issues before the Conference were often covered up rather than brought out in the open. Enforced conformity to less significant agendas is one way of suppressing conflict within the Conference.

The conference needs to evaluate its guidelines for bringing important issues out in the open. Every member of

the Conference, ministerial and lay alike, should be encouraged to bring anything necessary out in the open for Conference debate. If communion rather than conformity provides the basis for Conference debate, then conflict can produce a transforming ministry rather than leave many persons confused, isolated and alone.

*Evaluate: Formal and Informal Political Structures*

In keeping with a clearcut and open policy for conflict resolution, the Conference needs to evaluate both its formal and its informal communication and political structures. For years we have felt that "politics" within the church was at best an "evil necessity," and have therefore tolerated certain kinds of actions which were understood to be inevitable and necessary. Because we have been shy about bringing such action into the open, at certain points in our history individuals have informally taken control of modes of decision-making. This has been another way of enforcing control and conformity, and subsequently many ministers felt forced to leave.

Everyone in the Conference should share in the political process as much as possible. The formal administrative charts of decision-making must be evaluated to insure that they are effective in distributing the decision-making process among the Conference delegates. Persons in positions of authority who use coercive and irresponsible

tactics to maintain influence and power (if there are any) must be pressured to resign.

It is not necessarily beneficial in an organization to bring informal structures of communication and influence out into the open. Indeed, some of the previous suggestions which have been made to the Conference ministers indicate that more informal channels of communication and influence should be constructed. It would be detrimental to any organization to print black lists of corrupt informal political groups. The way in which to weaken the influence of such groups is through the indirect means of strengthening the formal structures of decision resolution.

*Celebrate: The Conference As a Means of Grace*

One of Wesley's greatest contributions to our theology of the church was his insistence that there are both prudential and instituted means of grace. Wesley insisted that the Conference of ministers was in itself a means of the work of the grace of God, where the ministers look at their own souls as well as the souls of those unto whom they minister. And the Conference is not simply a yearly meeting, but an ongoing institution of the activity of God in the world. It is therefore appropriate to celebrate the Conference as a means of grace. Debate and conflict, diversity, communion, cell groups, superintendents and advisors, local churches,

seminaries - all are the fruits of grace and cause for celebration.

#### TO THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

We have specifically addressed ourselves to the seminary students returning to the Mississippi Conference, and to the ministers of the Conference. Yet there are some appropriate conclusions from this study which may enable the United Methodist Church as a whole to aid its annual conferences in the resources they supply.

*Encourage: Inter-Conference Mobility*

The United States tends to be a very regional country, with the result of ethno- and sociocultural-centrism. Many other denominations encourage their ministers to move all around the country, but in United Methodism ministers usually settle in one place, discouraging diversity of experience for local churches. There are two ways in which such diversity could be opened up.

The first of these is the national appointment of bishops. While the regional election of bishops insures that every region will contribute to the leadership of the Church, it would seem proper then for the bishops to be appointed by a national committee through the approval of the General Conference. This would enable and encourage the leaders to assign bishops more according to the needs

of the nation rather than according to the political structures and desires of a particular region. Regionalism and stubborn pride are the two ingredients blocking this needed movement in the Church.

A second way is the creation of channels for inter-conference mobility. While in this mobile age the conferences need to maintain some sense of identity in their ministry, pastoral movement from one conference to another should be encouraged as a way of bringing new leadership and life into an area, and as a way of increasing the diversity of the ministry within a conference. Such mobility would also contribute tremendously to the understanding and dialogue between persons from different regions of the country.

*Appropriate: Funds for Pastoral and Laity Sabbaticals*

Both pastors and lay persons should be encouraged to take sabbaticals from their work to study or to make short-term contributions to the life of the Church. The General Conference should take a lead in promoting this kind of contribution by appropriating funds for scholarships and sponsorships through the Ministerial Education Fund. In this way we build the ministry of the Church, through both the professional pastors and the laity.



*Establish: Guidelines for Cluster Ministries*

The General Conference and its committees and organizations also could contribute to the ministry of the conferences by suggesting guidelines for the establishment of cluster ministries. Not only programs and worksheets but also consultants could be provided for conferences seeking to increase the effectiveness of their connectional system. This kind of grouping of church and ministries has been described above, and could be ecumenical ventures as well as within the Methodist Conference.

*Design: Regulations For Pastors' Quadrennial Evaluation Of Their Conferences.*

While pastors and conferences have plenty of administrative chores to which they must attend as they prepare for their own annual conferences and for the quadrennial general conference, pastors rarely have the opportunity to address themselves in some kind of systematic evaluation to the more personal needs and feelings which they have concerning their own conference. The questionnaire which I prepared (Appendix I), however, problemetical, indicates the kinds of questions to which too few pastors in the Conference have the opportunity address themselves. There are many feelings and opinions never expressed in the standard

reports. Such a systematic and personal evaluation would perhaps be too frequent as an annual tool, but would be much more useful quadrennially. The results could be prepared for Conference-wide distribution and for the use of committees and leaders as the Conference seeks to make its ministry more effective.

## CONCLUSION

As a seminary student, my decision to attend graduate school in hope of fulfilling a teaching ministry has already been made. Yet through this study I have confirmed my desire to seek a teaching position within the area of the Mississippi Conference, so that I might be a part of that Conference and its ministry. I realize of course the difficulty in finding an opening where one wants it.

Several factors which do not really sound theological went into this decision. One factor was that, in leaving the area for seminary, I was able to transcend my situation there and discover from an objective and comparative standpoint the values which the area holds for me.

While I have made my particular decision, ministers wherever they are face the central focus of this paper, i.e., how they will relate their ministry within an institution to the work of God in the world. As we function in our ministry, in our particular contexts, we must think theologically; we must bring our understanding of God to bear upon our work. And we must understand clearly that there is *no hiding place where God can not be found* and where we can not be co-creators with God - not even in the institution called church.

One of my parents' maxims for participation in the church is "we can always make it better, if we want to." This is perhaps more clearly stated than what I have wordily called the "church as a social process in need of specific transformative visions." The church is indeed a worldly place. Yet it is also a center where the world is continually being redeemed and the creation fulfilled.

## APPENDIXES

## APPENDIX A

## QUESTIONNAIRES

The three questionnaires, one to each group, are similar but do have some variations according to the situation of each group. Because questionnaires 1 and 2 are numbered alike through question 11, I will not reprint all of questionnaire 2. Question "2b" of questionnaire 2 varies slightly in wording and is therefore printed. Also, questions 12-14 are additions to the original and are therefore printed. Question 15 of questionnaire 2 is the same as question 12 on questionnaire 1.

Questionnaire 3 to the seminary students is quite different in number and selection of question, and is printed in full. Also the cover letters differ significantly and are also each printed in full.

# I. To the Mississippi Ministers in the Conference

Dear Sir,

As a United Methodist seminary student from the Mississippi Annual Conference, I will shortly be graduating from school and receiving an appointment. As the time draws nearer, I have more and more asked myself whether I should return to our annual conference to serve my ministry.

This self-questioning is not alarming, as most people who leave the state for seminary, and come into contact with other conferences, ask this kind of question. What concerns me is that, as I write this, I know of several young, bright seminary students from our conference who are answering this question, "No, I will not return, but will join another conference."

As I have begun to research this problem, I have noted over the past twenty years that many (would you believe, in the hundreds) United Methodist ministers who were originally affiliated with our conference have left, either during their first few years or when fresh out of seminary. My contact with fellow seminary students indicates that this concern has not diminished, but that we are continuing to export our ministers out of state. Frankly, I am concerned about this drain, as it denies our conference the quality of ministry that it could have.

Therefore, for my Senior Project (as a part of my seminary program) I am researching this problem. Because it is our concern - our conference at stake, I am asking you to help me by filling out the enclosed questionnaire.

Now I know that I myself usually transfer most questionnaires from mailbox to wastebasket. But I hope we will treat this one differently - our ministry in Mississippi is at issue (not to mention my Senior Project).

You can tell by the questions asked that this problem has many facets. If you would like to expand beyond the confinement of this kind of survey, I have at the end placed a box for a check - if you would like to discuss this with me personally, or over a tape recorder.

Finally, the signing of your name at the top is optional. This information will be entirely confidential; no names or suggested references will be used in the final work of this research.

Thank you for your help! Please reply, if possible, by September 1.

5

Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Seminary \_\_\_\_\_

Years in professional ministry \_\_\_\_\_

Current Church Membership (number) \_\_\_\_\_

Salary (including all expenses, except housing (check one):

\_\_\_ less than \$4999    \_\_\_ \$5000-\$6999    \_\_\_ \$7000-\$9999

\_\_\_ \$10,000-\$12,999    \_\_\_ \$13,000-\$15,999    \_\_\_ \$16,000-\$19,999

\_\_\_ more than \$20,000

I feel that my salary is: \_\_\_ inadequate    \_\_\_ adequate

\_\_\_ more than adequate

2. DURING MY CAREER: (for each item, check the appropriate answer(s),  
or write in your own)

(a) the most important functions of my ministry have been:

(list in order)

\_\_\_ visiting and counseling

\_\_\_ church building and construction

\_\_\_ church administration

\_\_\_ preaching and worship

\_\_\_ community action

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

(b) I have given the following consideration to moving to another  
annual conference:

\_\_\_ thoughtfully considered    \_\_\_ not seriously considered

\_\_\_ never considered

(c) I have found cultural values in Mississippi to be in the  
following relationship to those of the Christian tradition:

\_\_\_ general agreement    \_\_\_ direct conflict

\_\_\_ sometimes in tension

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(d) If I took an unpopular position in the Conference, I would:

\_\_\_ still be accepted by the leadership

\_\_\_ be congratulated for speaking out

\_\_\_ feel strain in my local church

\_\_\_ be threatened with an appointment change

Other \_\_\_\_\_



- (e) If I could be appointed to the kind of church I would most like, it would be:

\_\_\_ the small country charge    \_\_\_ the small town main church  
 \_\_\_ head minister of suburban church  
 \_\_\_ head minister of small "inner city" church  
 \_\_\_ conference officer  
 \_\_\_ head minister of large "first" church

- (f) In making a "prophetic" witness in my preaching or speaking, I have:

\_\_\_ felt great freedom    \_\_\_ felt inhibited  
 \_\_\_ felt that it was impossible

- (g) My first appointment was: \_\_\_ a circuit    \_\_\_ a small country church  
 \_\_\_ an associate    \_\_\_ a small town or city church  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

- (h) My transition from seminary to my first appointment was:

\_\_\_ smooth    \_\_\_ shocking    \_\_\_ sometimes difficult  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

- (i) In their relationship to the church, my family:

\_\_\_ feels comfortable    \_\_\_ feels pressured

- (j) check two of the following who have most influenced you:

\_\_\_ Paul Tillich    \_\_\_ Karl Barth    \_\_\_ Dwight L. Moody  
 \_\_\_ Clovis Chappel    \_\_\_ Richard Neibuhr  
 \_\_\_ Alfred N. Whitehead    \_\_\_ Keith Miller  
 \_\_\_ Harry Emerson Fosdick    \_\_\_ Harvey Cox  
 \_\_\_ Billy Graham    \_\_\_ Reinhold Neibuhr

- (k) My concept and practice of ministry has:

\_\_\_ changed drastically    \_\_\_ gradually grown  
 \_\_\_ stayed about the same

Other \_\_\_\_\_

- (l) The following satisfactions have been very important for me:

\_\_\_ group support    \_\_\_ full use of my talents    \_\_\_ regular advancement  
 \_\_\_ effective power in the conference  
 \_\_\_ family well-being and security    \_\_\_ church growth  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

## 3. In this state, generally:

- (a) the climate is: ☐ good ☐ disagreeable ☐ all right
- (b) I: ☐ feel at home ☐ do not feel at home
- (c) I: ☐ have family concerns here ☐ do not have family concerns here
- (d) I: ☐ have friends here ☐ do not have a great many friends here
- (e) The standard of living as opposed to other sections of the country  
 is: food: ☐ lower ☐ higher clothing: ☐ lower ☐ higher shelter: ☐ lower ☐ higher

## 4. In this conference, generally:

- (a) I: ☐ like the fellowship of its ministers  
☐ do not share in this fellowship
- (b) I sometimes feel that political power is located in the hands of:  
☐ 1-2 persons ☐ 3-9 persons ☐ 10 or more persons
- (c) in the above group, the bishop: ☐ is part of the power  
☐ is not part of the power
- (d) regarding criteria for appointments, I feel that the bishop and  
 his cabinet and I:  
☐ share the same criteria ☐ have entirely different criteria  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
- (e) from the conference leaders I have experienced:  
☐ support ☐ hindrance ☐ neither help nor hindrance  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_
- (f) the leadership is: ☐ solid, sound ☐ average  
☐ weak and ineffective
- (g) from my peer group of ministers I feel that I have:  
☐ a supportive relationship ☐ I feel all alone  
☐ a negative and/or hostile relationship
- (h) during my career, for unpopular stand which I have taken:  
☐ I have suffered acts of reprisal by church members and the  
 community  
☐ I have suffered acts of reprisal by conference leaders  
☐ I have never been threatened or harmed (no acts against me)
- (i) ☐ I would rather be an individual in my ministry  
☐ I would rather be a part of a group in my ministry

(j) in regard to most issues, I feel that they are:

\_\_\_ explored fully and out in the open

\_\_\_ often covered up

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(k) \_\_\_ I have been treated fairly in regard to appointments

\_\_\_ Have not been dealt with fairly.

(l) in regard to the opportunities for continuing education, I am:

\_\_\_ pleased \_\_\_ satisfied \_\_\_ dissatisfied

(m) in regard to the availability of resources in this conference,

I am:

\_\_\_ pleased \_\_\_ satisfied \_\_\_ dissatisfied

5. I am a member of:

\_\_\_ a service club (Rotary, Lions, etc.)

\_\_\_ a social club (Country Club, Elks, etc.)

\_\_\_ a hobby club (tennis, gardening, etc.)

\_\_\_ an arts league

\_\_\_ a community improvement agency

Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. I would characterize my current location as:

\_\_\_ farming-trade, small town \_\_\_ business-industrial, small town

\_\_\_ farming-trade, large town \_\_\_ business-industrial, large town

\_\_\_ open country circuit or small church

7. Within twenty miles of my church there is at least one:

\_\_\_ radio station \_\_\_ television station

\_\_\_ neither radio nor television station

8. The distance between my church and the nearest other Methodist

Church is (in miles):

\_\_\_ less than one \_\_\_ 1-3 \_\_\_ 4-7 \_\_\_ 8-12 \_\_\_ 13 or more

9. In general, the largest financial contributors to my church are:

\_\_\_ land owners or growers \_\_\_ professionals (Doctors, teachers, etc.)

\_\_\_ in cattle or farming \_\_\_ blue collar or clerical

\_\_\_ white collar business

10. In regard to a building (plant) program, my church is:

\_\_\_ currently engaged in one

\_\_\_ currently financing one (past or future)

☐ not currently funding one

☐ does not foresee one in the next ten years.

11. I would counsel a young seminary student to:

☐ return to the Mississippi conference

☐ consider some other annual conference in the south

☐ consider some other annual conference in another part of the country.

12. How do you view the potentiality of the ministry of the Mississippi Methodist Church in general:

☐ stale and ineffective

☐ good

☐ exciting

Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to continue this important issue with you in private discussion, in person or through the mail via tape recordings.

## II. To the Ministers Who Left the Conference, 1955-74

Dear Sir:

As a United Methodist seminary student from the Mississippi Annual Conference, I will shortly be graduating from school and receiving an appointment. As the time draws nearer, I have more and more asked myself whether I should return to that conference to serve my ministry.

Does this kind of self-questioning sound familiar? Most of the people who have left the state have asked this kind of question. Several of my fellow seminary students from Mississippi and I have greatly pondered this question, and most are saying, "No, I will not return, but will join another conference."

As I have begun to research this problem, I have noted over the past twenty years that many (would you believe, in the hundreds) United Methodist ministers who were originally affiliated with my conference have left, either during their first few years or when fresh out of seminary. My contact with fellow seminary students indicates that this concern has not diminished, but that Mississippi is continuing to export ministers out of state.

Therefore, for my Senior Project (as a part of my seminary program) I am researching this problem. Because you have made a similar decision to the one I am facing, and came out where you did, I need your help. Would you please take time and help me by filling out the enclosed questionnaire?

Now I know that I myself usually transfer most questionnaires from mailbox to wastebasket. But I hope that you will treat this one differently - a vital matter is at stake for the ministry in Mississippi in general, as well as my own.

You can tell by the questions asked that this problem is complex. If you would like to expand beyond the confinement of this kind of survey, I have at the end placed a box for a check - if you would like to discuss this with me personally, or over a tape recorder.

Finally, the signing of your name at the top is optional. This information will be entirely confidential; no names or suggested references will be used in the final work of this research.

Thank you for your help! Please reply, if possibly by September 1.

- 2(b) Recently I have given the following consideration  
to moving back to the Mississippi Conference:

☐ thoughtfully considered  
☐ not seriously considered  
☐ never considered

12. In moving into this conference from Mississippi, I  
found it:

☐ very difficult to shift into this social and  
institutional structure  
☐ quite simple to shift into this conference social and  
institutional structure

13. In moving into this state from Mississippi, I found it:

☐ very difficult to shift into this cultural lifestyle.  
☐ quite simple to shift into this cultural lifestyle.

14. Was there a specific issue which furthered my decision  
to leave Mississippi?

☐ Yes If "yes", was the issue ☐ ethical-social

☐ personal

☐ No

☐ political

☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

### III. To the Mississippi Conference Seminary Students (Fall, 1975)

Dear Sir:

As a fellow United Methodist seminary student from the Mississippi Annual Conference, I will shortly be graduating from school and receiving an appointment. As the time draws nearer, I have more and more asked myself whether I should return to our annual conference to serve my ministry.

This self-questioning is not alarming, as most of us who have to go out of state for seminary, and come into contact with other conferences, ask this kind of question. What concerns me is that, as I write this, I know several of us in seminary from our conference who are answering this question, "No, I will not return, but will join another conference."

As I have begun to research this problem, I have noted over the past twenty years that many (would you believe, in the hundreds) United Methodist ministers who were originally affiliated with our conference have left, either during their first few years or when fresh out of the seminary. My contact with fellow seminary students indicates that this concern has not diminished, but that we are continuing to export our ministers out of state. Frankly, I am concerned about this drain, as it denies our conference the quality of ministry that it could have.

Therefore, for my Senior Project (as a part of my seminary program) I am researching this problem. Because it is our concern - our conference at stake, I am asking you to help me by filling out the enclosed questionnaire.

Now I know that I myself usually transfer most questionnaires from mailbox to wastebasket. But I hope we will treat this one differently - our ministry in Mississippi is at issue (not to mention my Senior Project).

You can tell by the questions asked that this problem has many facets. If you would like to expand beyond the confinement of this kind of survey, I have at the end placed a box for a check - if you would like to discuss this with me personally, or over a tape recorder.

Finally the signing of your name at the top is optional. This information will be entirely confidential; no names or

suggested references will be used in the final work of this research.

Thank you for your help! Please reply, if possible, by September 1.



Name (optional) \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_ Seminary \_\_\_\_\_

Years in seminary to date \_\_\_\_\_ Number of members in church you have worked in during your seminary training \_\_\_\_\_

2. DURING MY LIFE: (for each item, check the appropriate answer(s), or write in your own)

(a) the most important functions of my ministry so far have been

(list in order):

\_\_\_\_\_ visiting and counseling \_\_\_\_\_ church building and construction

\_\_\_\_\_ church administration \_\_\_\_\_ preaching and worship

\_\_\_\_\_ community action \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

(b) I have given the following consideration to changing annual conferences:

\_\_\_\_\_ thoughtfully considered \_\_\_\_\_ not seriously considered

\_\_\_\_\_ never considered

(c) I have found cultural values in Mississippi to be in the following relationship to those of the Christian tradition:

\_\_\_\_\_ general agreement \_\_\_\_\_ direct conflict \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes in tension

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(d) If I could be appointed to the kind of church I would most like, it would be:

\_\_\_\_\_ the small country charge \_\_\_\_\_ the small town main church

\_\_\_\_\_ on a church staff \_\_\_\_\_ head minister of suburban church

\_\_\_\_\_ head minister of small "inner city" church

\_\_\_\_\_ conference officer \_\_\_\_\_ head minister of large "first" church

(e) In making a "prophetic" witness in my preaching or speaking, I have so far:

\_\_\_\_\_ felt great freedom \_\_\_\_\_ felt inhibited \_\_\_\_\_ felt that it was impossible.

(f) Check two of the following who have most influenced you:

\_\_\_\_\_ Paul Tillich \_\_\_\_\_ Karl Barth \_\_\_\_\_ Dwight L. Moody

\_\_\_\_\_ Clovis Chappel \_\_\_\_\_ Richard Neibuhr \_\_\_\_\_ Alfred N. Whitehead

\_\_\_\_\_ Keith Miller \_\_\_\_\_ Harry Emerson Fosdick \_\_\_\_\_ Harvey Cox

\_\_\_\_\_ Billy Graham \_\_\_\_\_ Reinhold Neibuhr \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

(g) The following satisfactions will be very important to me in my ministry:

\_\_\_group support      \_\_\_full use of my talents  
 \_\_\_regular advancement      \_\_\_effective power in the conference  
 \_\_\_family well-being and security      \_\_\_church growth  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. In the Mississippi Conference, generally:

(a) I: \_\_\_like the fellowship of its ministers

\_\_\_do not share in this fellowship

(b) I sometimes feel that political power is located in the hands of:

\_\_\_1-2 persons      \_\_\_3-9 persons      \_\_\_10 or more persons

(c) in the above group, the bishop: \_\_\_is part of the power

\_\_\_is not part of the power

(d) I would rather be an individual in my ministry \_\_\_

I would rather be a part of a group in my ministry \_\_\_

(e) in regard to most issues, I feel that they are:

\_\_\_explored fully and out in the open

\_\_\_often covered up

Other \_\_\_\_\_

(f) in regard to the opportunities for continuing education, I am:

\_\_\_pleased      \_\_\_satisfied      \_\_\_dissatisfied

(g) in regard to the availability of resources in this conference,

I am:

\_\_\_pleased      \_\_\_satisfied      \_\_\_dissatisfied

4. Who do you consult when you are thinking about leaving the ministry in Mississippi for another annual conference? (list in order)

\_\_\_a professor at my school

\_\_\_someone from that other annual conference

\_\_\_a minister(s) in Mississippi

\_\_\_conference leaders in Mississippi

\_\_\_friends and associates

Other \_\_\_\_\_

5. In regard to graduate work (with the option of teaching) beyond the basic seminary degree:

☐ I plan immediately after seminary to go to graduate school.

☐ I would like to return to graduate school to work further in the next few years

☐ I have no plans to go beyond this basic seminary degree

Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Since I have been in seminary:

☐ I have had a letter or a personal visit with a conference leader from home.

☐ I have not had any letter or personal visit from a conference leader, except when I myself originated the correspondence.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. Please check one (if checking more than one, then list in order):

☐ I would like to have a major role in deciding what kind of appointment I will first have.

☐ While I would like such an option, I will trust the leaders to find the most suitable appointment for me.

☐ It is my duty to go where I am assigned, regardless of my own designs and talents.

Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. How do you view the potentiality of the ministry of the Mississippi Methodist Church in general?

☐ stale and ineffective

☐ good

☐ exciting

Other \_\_\_\_\_

☐ I would like to continue this important issue with you in private discussion, in person or through the mail via tape recordings.

## APPENDIX B

## TABULATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSES

The questionnaires did not permit enough space for the recording of these statistics. Therefore the percentages along with the raw data are recorded here. The numbers and letters for each group are the same as on the respective questionnaires, and I refer the reader back to the questionnaires (Appendix A) for the appropriate questions.

## I. Mississippi Ministers in the Conference

Total number of Ministers (T): 301  
 Total Number Questionnaires Sent (S): 289  
 Total Number Questionnaires Returned (R): 123

R/T = 40.9%

R/S = 42.6%

Questionnaires Not Sent (NS) due to insufficient address: 12

Ministers wishing to continue via cassette tape: 37 (30.1%R)

\*\*\*\*\*

N: number who responded to a particular answer

%R: N/R

%T: N/T

	<u>N</u>	<u>%R</u>	<u>%T</u>
I. a. average	46.8		
20-29 yrs:	8	6.5	2.7
30-39 yrs:	23	18.7	7.6
40-49 yrs:	30	24.4	10.0
50-59 yrs:	32	26.0	10.6
60-69 yrs:	14	11.4	4.7
b. seminary:			
Emory	69	56.1	22.9
Perkins:	9	7.3	3.0
Asbury:	5	4.1	1.7

Gammon:	4	3.3	1.3
Duke:	3	2.4	1.0
None:	9	7.3	1.3

Others: (one each) ITC, Harvard, Illiff, Phillips, Garrett,  
Yale, Union, Drew, Claremont

c. Yrs. in Min. average: 20.2

0-9	17	13.8	5.6
10-19	37	30.1	12.3
20-29	41	33.3	13.6
30-	22	17.9	7.3

d. Current Church Membership average: 549

0-199	11	8.9	3.7
200-399	32	26.0	10.6
400-599	24	19.5	8.0
600-799	3	2.4	1.0
800-999	12	9.8	4.0
1000-1199	5	4.1	1.7
1200-1399	1	0.8	0.3
1400-1599	6*	4.9	2.0
1600-	5*	4.1	1.7

\*includes four assistant ministers

e. Salary

0-4900	2	1.6	0.7
5000-6999	6	4.9	2.0
7000-9999	34	27.6	11.3
10,000-12,999	45	36.6	15.0
13,000-15,999	25	20.3	8.3
16,000-19,999	11	8.9	3.7
20,000+	0	0	0

f. inad:	30	24.4	10.0
adeq:	82	66.7	27.2
mtad:	3	2.4	1.0

2. a.	1	2	3	4	5
visit:	41	54	8	1	0
chadm:	9	6	52	15	7
comac:	6	6	16	31	22
chbld:	16	1	8	26	38
prwor:	83	22	1	2	1

## 2. a. cont'd

According to the previous table for N, percentages are computed for percent of total down (% d) each column, and percent across (% a) each row.

	%d	%a	%d	%a	%d	%a	%d	%a	%d	%a
visit:	25	39	61	52	9	8	1	1	0	0
chadm:	6	10	7	7	61	58	20	17	10	8
comac:	4	7	7	7	19	20	41	38	32	27
chbld:	10	18	1	1	9	9	34	29	56	43
prwor:	51	76	25	20	1	2	3	2	2	1

Unless indicated, all answers to the following questions will number across the page of the questionnaire and not down.

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
b. (1)	60	48.8	19.9
(2)	40	32.5	13.3
(3)	23	18.7	7.6
c. (1)	26	21.1	8.6
(2)	8	6.5	2.7
(3)	93	75.6	30.9
d. (1)	58	47.2	19.3
(2)	14	11.4	4.7
(3)	34	27.6	11.3
(4)	19	15.4	6.3
e. (1)	8	6.5	2.7
(2)	60	48.8	19.9
(3)	9	7.3	3.0
(4)	24	19.5	8.0
(5)	10	8.1	3.3
(6)	5	4.1	1.7
(7)	11	8.9	3.7
f. (1)	85	69.1	28.2
(2)	34	27.6	11.3
(3)	3	2.4	1.0
g. (1)	80	65.0	26.6
(2)	12	9.8	4.0
(3)	10	8.1	3.3
(4)	20	16.3	6.6

		<u>N</u>	<u>%R</u>	<u>% T</u>	
2.	h.	(1)	69	56.1	22.9
		(2)	9	7.3	3.0
		(3)	33	26.8	11.0
	i.	(1)	95	77.2	31.6
		(2)	22	17.9	7.3
	j	Tillich:	29	23.6	9.6
		Chapel:	28	22.8	9.3
		Miller:	26	21.1	8.6
		Graham:	17	13.8	5.6
		Barth:	26	21.1	8.6
		Rich N:	11	8.9	3.7
		H. Fosd:	53	43.1	17.6
		Rein N:	21	17.1	7.0
		Moody:	15	12.2	5.0
		Whiteh:	15	12.2	5.0
		Cox:	7	5.7	2.3
		Others:	M. L. King (2), Kant, Barclay, Bultmann, H. Thurman, Carlyle Marney, Edwin Lewis, Carter G. Woodson, Bud Robinson, Oliver Scott, Gandhi, Bob Moses, and A. J. Nuste.		
	k.	(1)	17	13.8	5.6
		(2)	100	81.3	33.2
		(3)	5	4.1	1.7
1	(1)	58	47.2	19.3	
	(2)	83	67.5	27.6	
	(3)	28	22.8	9.3	
	(4)	6	4.9	2.0	
	(5)	51	41.5	16.9	
	(6)	54	43.9	17.9	
3.	a	(1)	63	51.2	10.9
		(2)	6	4.9	2.0
		(3)	42	34.1	14.0
	b.	(1)	107	87.0	35.5
		(2)	4	3.3	1.3
	c.	(1)	98	79.7	32.6
		(2)	14	11.4	4.7
	d.	(1)	111	90.2	36.9
		(2)	3	2.4	1.0
	e. f	(1)	40	32.5	13.3
		(2)	31	25.2	10.3
	c	(1)	47	38.2	15.6
		(2)	21	17.1	7.0
	s	(1)	52	42.3	17.3
(2)		15	12.2	5.0	

		<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
4.	a. (1)	95	77.2	31.6
	(2)	15	12.2	5.0
	b. (1)	9	7.3	3.0
	(2)	51	41.5	16.9
	(3)	48	39.0	15.9
	c. (1)	71	57.7	23.6
	(2)	34	27.6	11.3
	d. (1)	37	30.1	12.3
	(2)	48	39.0	15.9
	e. (1)	68	55.3	22.6
	(2)	19	15.4	6.3
	(3)	31	25.2	10.3
	f. (1)	12	9.8	4.0
	(2)	66	53.7	21.9
	(3)	34	27.6	11.3
	g. (1)	101	82.1	33.6
	(2)	13	10.6	4.3
	(3)	4	3.3	1.3
	h. (1)	26	21.1	8.6
	(2)	18	14.6	6.0
	(3)	72	58.5	23.9
	i. (1)	51	41.5	16.9
	(2)	63	51.2	20.9
	j. (1)	38	30.9	12.6
	(2)	78	63.4	25.9
	k. (1)	88	71.5	29.2
	(2)	18	14.6	6.0
	l. (1)	30	24.4	10.0
	(2)	48	39.0	15.9
	(3)	36	29.3	12.0
	m. (1)	16	13.0	5.3
	(2)	55	44.7	18.3
	(3)	39	31.7	13.0
5.	(1)	61	49.6	20.3
	(2)	19	15.4	6.3
	(3)	26	21.1	8.6
	(4)	5	4.1	1.7
	(5)	41	33.3	13.6



		<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>	
6.	(1)	31	25.2	10.3	
	(2)	35	28.5	11.6	
	(3)	6	4.9	2.0	
	(4)	47	38.2	15.6	
	(5)	6	4.9	2.0	
7.	rad:	114	92.7	37.9	
	tel:	80	65.0	26.6	
	nei:	3	2.4	1.0	
8.	0-1:	32	26.0	10.6	
	1-3:	45	36.6	15.0	
	4-7:	30	24.4	10.0	
	8-12:	13	10.6	4.3	
	13+	4	3.3	1.3	
9.	(1)	18	14.6	6.0	Retired: 2
	(2)	46	37.4	15.3	Military: 1
	(3)	13	10.6	4.3	
	(4)	27	22.0	9.0	
	(5)	44	35.8	14.6	
10.	(1)	29	23.6	9.6	
	(2)	54	43.9	17.9	
	(3)	22	17.9	7.3	
	(4)	20	16.3	6.6	
11.	(1)	97	78.9	32.2	
	(2)	3	2.4	1.0	
	(3)	3	2.4	1.0	
12.	(1)	18	14.6	6.0	
	(2)	55	44.7	18.3	
	(3)	37	30.1	12.3	

## II. Ministers Who Left The Mississippi Conference, 1955-74

Total Number of Ministers Who Left (T): 160

Total Number Questionnaires Sent (S): 124

Total Number Questionnaires Returned (R): 52

R/T = 32.5%

R/S = 41.9%

Questionnaires Not Sent (NS) due to the following:

	<u>N</u>	<u>% T</u>	<u>% S</u>
Couldn't Locate:	22	13.8	-
Retired:	9	5.6	-
Left, Then Returned:	5	3.1	-

Other significant statistics:

Min. Not In Parish:	29	18.1	23.4
Min. Granted Disability L:	3	1.9	2.4
Supernumerary Min:	3	1.9	2.4
Min. To North Mississippi:	13	8.1	10.5

Ministers Wishing To Continue Via Cassette Tape: 21 (40.4% R)

\*\*\*\*\*

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
I. a. average	48.0		
20-29 yrs.	2	3.8	1.3
30-39 yrs.	7	12.5	4.4
40-49 yrs.	22	42.3	13.8
50-59 yrs.	14	26.9	8.8
60-69 yrs.	5	9.6	3.1
b. seminary:			
Emory:	25	48.1	15.6
Asbury:	5	9.6	3.1
Yale:	5	9.6	3.1
Perkins:	4	7.7	2.5
STC:	4	7.7	2.5
Duke:	3	5.8	1.9
Drew	2	3.8	1.3
Others:	Vanderbilt, CTS, Garrett, Boston, Luther Rice, Wesley, Harvard, University of Southern California.		

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
c. Yrs. in Min. average:		20.2	
0-9	4	7.7	2.5
10-19	11	21.2	6.9
20-29	22	42.3	13.8
30+	11	21.2	6.9

d. Current Church Membership average: 882.9			
0-199	2	3.8	1.3
200-399	6	11.5	3.8
400-599	6	11.5	3.8
600-899	4	7.7	2.5
900-1199	6	11.5	3.8
1200-1599	7	13.5	4.4
1600+	2	3.8	1.3

## e. Salary

0-4900	0	0.0	0.0
5000-6999	1	1.9	0.6
7000-9999	7	13.5	4.4
10,000-12,999	12	23.1	7.5
13,000-15,999	10	19.2	6.3
15,000-19,999	13	25.0	8.1
20,000+	8	15.4	5.0

f. inad:	12	23.1	7.5
adeq:	32	61.5	20.0
mtad:	2	3.8	1.3

2. a.	1	2	3	4	5
visit:	13	22	5	2	1
chadm:	3	3	17	10	2
comac:	1	1	9	9	15
chbld:	0	0	3	11	14
prwor:	35	7	2	0	0
Also: evangelism (2), education (3), program development (1), music (1)					

According to the previous table for N, percentages are computed for percent of total down (% d) each column, and percent across (% a) each row.

	%d	%a	%d	%a	%d	%a	%d	%a	%d	%a
visit	25	30	67	51	14	12	6	5	3	2
chadm:	6	9	9	9	47	49	31	29	6	6
comac:	2	3	3	3	25	26	28	26	47	43
chbld:	0	0	0	0	8	11	34	39	44	50
prwor:	67	80	21	16	6	5	0	0	0	0

Unless indicated, all answers to the following questions will number across the page of the questionnaire (Appendix I) and not down.

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
b. (1)	7	13.5	4.4
(2)	15	28.8	9.4
(3)	26	50.0	16.3
c. (1)	3	5.8	1.9
(2)	12	23.1	7.5
(3)	35	67.3	21.9
d. (1)	29	55.8	18.1
(2)	7	13.5	4.4
(3)	13	25.0	8.1
(4)	7	13.5	4.4
e (1)	2	3.8	1.3
(2)	19	36.5	11.9
(3)	1	1.9	0.6
(4)	13	25.0	8.1
(5)	2	3.8	1.3
(6)	2	3.8	1.3
(7)	9	17.3	5.6
f (1)	41	78.8	25.6
(2)	7	13.5	4.4
(3)	1	1.9	0.6
g (1)	35	67.3	21.9
(2)	6	11.5	3.8
(3)	3	5.8	1.9
(4)	3	5.8	1.9
h (1)	31	59.6	19.4
(2)	5	9.6	3.1
(3)	13	25.0	8.1
i (1)	40	76.9	25.0
(2)	8	15.4	5.0
j Tillich:	13	25.0	8.1
Chapel:	10	19.2	6.3
Miller:	6	11.5	3.8
Graham:	8	15.4	5.0
Barth:	7	13.5	4.4
Rich N:	7	13.5	4.4
H Fosd:	19	36.5	11.9
Rein N:	8	15.4	5.0
Moody:	3	5.8	1.9

		<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
	Whiteh:	3	5.8	1.9
	Cox:	3	5.8	1.9
	Others: James S. Stewart, Harshorne, Anselm			
k.	(1)	6	11.5	3.8
	(2)	36	69.2	22.5
	(3)	5	9.6	3.1
1	(1)	23	44.2	14.4
	(2)	37	71.2	23.1
	(3)	12	23.1	7.5
	(4)	6	11.5	3.8
	(5)	25	48.1	15.6
	(6)	16	30.8	10.0
3.	a. (1)	34	65.4	21.3
	(2)	2	3.8	1.3
	(3)	15	28.8	9.4
	b. (1)	47	90.4	29.4
	(2)	3	5.8	1.9
	c. (1)	20	38.5	12.5
	(2)	22	42.3	13.8
	d. (1)	46	88.5	28.8
	(2)	3	5.8	1.9
	e. f (1)	12	23.1	7.5
	(2)	27	51.9	16.9
	c (1)	14	26.9	8.8
	(2)	23	44.2	14.4
	s (1)	17	32.7	10.6
	(2)	22	42.3	13.8
4.	a. (1)	42	80.8	26.3
	(2)	6	11.5	3.8
	b. (1)	0	0.0	0.0
	(2)	9	17.3	5.6
	(3)	33	63.5	20.6
	c. (1)	35	67.3	21.9
	(2)	5	9.6	3.1
	d. (1)	23	44.2	14.4
	(2)	9	17.3	5.6

		<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
e.	(1)	34	65.4	21.3
	(2)	0	0.0	0.0
	(3)	12	23.1	7.5
f.	(1)	11	21.2	6.9
	(2)	33	63.5	20.6
	(3)	2	3.8	1.3
g.	(1)	41	78.8	25.6
	(2)	2	3.8	1.3
	(3)	1	1.9	0.6
h.	(1)	15	28.8	9.4
	(2)	10	19.2	6.3
	(3)	26	50.0	16.3
i.	(1)	25	48.1	15.6
	(2)	20	38.5	12.5
j.	(1)	27	51.9	16.9
	(2)	16	30.8	10.0
k.	(1)	41	78.8	25.6
	(2)	5	9.6	3.1
l	(1)	22	42.3	13.8
	(2)	23	44.2	14.4
	(3)	2	3.8	1.3
m	(1)	22	42.3	13.8
	(2)	19	36.5	11.9
	(3)	3	5.8	1.9
5.	(1)	29	55.8	18.1
	(2)	12	23.1	7.5
	(3)	9	17.3	5.6
	(4)	5	9.6	3.1
	(5)	24	46.2	15.0
6.	(1)	11	21.2	6.9
	(2)	15	28.8	9.4
	(3)	3	5.8	1.9
	(4)	18	34.6	11.3
	(5)	0	0.0	0.0
suburb: 1; university: 2				
7.	rad:	47	90.4	29.4
	tel:	40	76.9	25.0
	nei:	1	1.9	0.6

		<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>	<u>% T</u>
8.	0-1:	10	19.2	6.3
	1-3:	4	7.7	2.5
	4-7:	19	36.5	11.9
	8-12:	2	3.8	1.3
	13+:	9	17.3	5.6
9.	(1)	5	9.6	3.1
	(2)	23	44.2	14.4
	(3)	5	9.6	3.1
	(4)	6	11.5	3.8
	(5)	20	38.5	12.5
	Government: 1			
10.	(1)	6	11.5	3.8
	(2)	25	48.1	15.6
	(3)	4	7.7	2.5
	(4)	10	19.2	6.3
11.	(1)	16	30.8	10.0
	(2)	14	26.9	8.8
	(3)	9	17.3	5.6
	All:	5	9.6	3.1
	To N. Mis:	2	3.8	1.3
12.	(1)	3	5.8	1.9
	(2)	44	84.6	27.5
13.	(1)	1		
	(2)	44	84.6	27.5
14.	Yes:	39	75.0	24.4
	Eth:	20	38.5	12.5
	Per:	18	38.5	12.5
	Pol:	27	51.9	16.9
	Other:	Integration, Asbury Graduate, Ministerial Leadership and Mississippi Provincialism		
	No:	5	9.6	3.1
15.	(1)	17	32.7	10.6
	(2)	12	23.1	7.5
	(3)	5	9.6	3.1

### III. Mississippi Conference Seminary Students

Total Number of Seminary Students (T): 23\*  
 Total Number of Questionnaires Sent (s) 21\*  
 Total Number of Questionnaires Returned (R): 11\*

\*includes myself

$$R/S = 52.4\%$$

Students I was unable to locate: 2 (8.7% T)

For the seminary students I computed only % R and not % T

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>			
I. a. average:	29.3				
b. seminary:					
Emory	4	36.4			
Asbury	3	27.3			
Iliff:	2	18.2			
Others: STC, ITC (one each)					
c. Yrs. in Sem. average:	2.2				
d. Number of members average:	590.5				
2. a.	1	2	3	4	5
visit:	2	4	1	1	0
chadm:	3	0	3	1	2
comac:	2	0	1	2	1
chbld:	0	0	0	1	1
prwor:	7	2	0	0	0
Youth work:	2 firsts				
Education:	1 first and 1 three				

b. According to the previous table for N, percentages are computed only for percent of total down (% d) each column.

	%d	%d	%d	%d	%d
visit	14	67	20	20	0
chadm:	21	0	60	20	20
comac:	14	0	20	40	25
chbld:	0	0	20	20	25
prwor:	50	33	0	0	0



Unless indicated, all answers to the following questions will number across the page of the questionnaire and not down.

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>
b. (1)	4	36.4
(2)	3	27.3
(3)	4	36.4
c. (1)	2	18.2
(2)	1	9.1
(3)	10	90.9
d. (1)	2	18.2
(2)	5	45.4
(3)	3	27.3
(4)	5	45.4
(5)	2	18.2
(6)	0	0.0
(7)	1	9.1
e. (1)	7	63.6
(2)	3	27.3
(3)	0	0.0
f. Tillich:	2	18.2
Chappell:	1	9.1
Miller:	2	18.2
Graham:	4	36.4
Barth:	2	18.2
Rich N:	1	9.1
H. Fosd:	1	9.1
Rein N:	2	18.2
Moody:	2	18.2
Whiteh:	2	18.2
Cox:	0	0.0
Others (one each):	Thielicke, Bill Bright, Hartshorne, H. H. Potthoff	
g. (1)	6	54.5
(2)	10	90.9
(3)	3	27.3
(4)	1	9.1
(5)	8	72.7
(6)	2	18.2
Others: evangelism (1)		
3. a. (1)	9	81.8
(2)	2	18.2
b. (1)	3	27.3
(2)	4	36.4
(3)	3	27.3

	<u>N</u>	<u>% R</u>
c. (1)	7	63.6
(2)	3	27.3
d. (1)	6	54.5
(2)	5	45.4
e. (1)	1	9.1
(2)	5	45.4
f. (1)	1	9.1
(2)	5	45.4
(3)	4	36.4
g. (1)	1	9.1
(2)	6	54.5
(3)	3	27.3

4. Data returns were inconsistent. Some respondents ranked the answers, while others checked the answers. The raw data appears thus:

(1) 5, 4, 4, ✓  
 (2) 6, 5, 2, 1  
 (3) 4, 2, 3, ✓, ✓  
 (4) 3, 3, 5  
 (5) 2, 1, 1, 2, ✓

The order would be, in importance,

5 - 3 - 4 - 2 - 1.

"God" received one write-in vote.

5.	(1)	4	36.4
	(2)	6	54.5
	(3)	0	0.0
6	(1)	8	72.7
	(2)	3	27.3
7	(1)	7*	63.7
	(2)	6**	54.5
	(3)	2***	18.2
	*includes one "2"		
	**includes one "2"		
	***includes two "3"		
8	(1)	2	18.2
	(2)	5	45.4
	(3)	3	27.3

## APPENDIX C

## ROSTER OF MINISTERS

Listed below are the names of all persons who have left the Mississippi Conference between 1955 and 1974. Included are five persons who have returned to the Conference, those who are retired, on supernumerary or disability leave, and who moved to the N. Mississippi Conference. Their names, their 1974 appointments, and their Conferences are listed. Notes are made indicating when this data is not available.

Alexander, Robert L. Third Avenue UMC, N. Columbus, Ohio (West Ohio Conference) 43206

Adams, James L. Lesseigne Memorial UMC, LaPlace, Louisiana (Louisiana)

Barlow, Hubert L. First UMC, West LaFayette, Indiana (North Indiana)

Bevill, Lillard R. Greenwood UMC, Greenwood, Louisiana (Louisiana)

Bevill, Woodrow W. Mangham UMC, Mangham, LA (Monroe DS, Louisiana)

Bishop, Audie C. First UMC, Clarksdale, MS (N. Miss.)

Blackwell, Derwood. Retired. (Texas, Houston Area)

Blair, Burton F. Stonewall UMC, Stonewall, MS (Miss.) (was in Florida, came back)

Blount, Forrest N., Jr. Chaplain U.S. Army (Louisiana)

Blount, Henry C., Jr. First Natchitoches UMC, Natchitoches, LA (Louisiana)

Brown, J. Paul. First UMC, Port Arthur, Texas (Texas)

Bugg, Charles Vardaman. Brown Street UMC, LaFayette, Indiana (North Indiana)

Burnett, Ivan, Jr. Chaplain I. Burnett, NAVCOMMSTA - GUAM, FPO San Francisco 96630

Burnett, James P. (Withdrawn from Cal-Nev. Conf.)

Burton, Charles H. St. Andrew's UMC, Amory, MS (N. Miss.)

Butler, D. P. (can't locate) (formerly to New England)

Byrd, William O. Denver Technological Center, Denver, Colorado (Rocky Mountain)

Calcote, L. Russell Bison UMC, Bison Kansas (Hays DS, Kansas West)

Caldwell, Jack L. (can't locate; transferred out in '57 to Oregon)

Campbell, James C. Assistant General Secretary, TRAFICO (South Carolina)

Campbell, Lynwood. (can't locate)

Carraway, L.M. (can't locate)

Carruth, Paul. Trinity UMC, Durham, N.C. (North Carolina)

Carruth, Thomas. Associate Prof. Asbury Theo Seminary (North Georgia)

Carruth, Sam. Retired, 1974, North Indiana (lives in Claremont, CA)

Carter, Wilton. Chaplain US Air Force. (Florida Conf.)

Case, Billy Dean. Seminole Heights UMC, Tampa, Florida (Florida)

Case, Martin. Franklin UMC, Laurel, MS (Miss)

Case, Robert. Aloma UMC, Winter Park, FL (Florida)

Chapman, Jerry D. Dir Parish Development, Tallahassee (Florida)

Chatham, J. W. Jr. Louisville First UMC, Louisville, MS (North Miss)  
 Clark, Roy C. West End UMC, Nashville, Tenn. (Tenn.)  
 Cowan, Lucius. (was in Memphis Conf.) Retired, 1974, Miss.  
 Crawford, John Harmon, III. St. John UMC, Edinburg, Vir. (Virginia)  
 Crosby, Tom O., Jr. Maplewood UMC, Maplewood, LA (Louisiana)  
 Curtis, Ed. (W.E.?) Mental Health Complex, Louisville, MS (North Miss)

Davis, M.L. Walker UMC, Walker, LA (Louisiana)  
 Delamotte, Roy C. Prof. Paine College (Holston)  
 Dickerson, E. Robert. Shalimar UMC, Shalimar, Fla. (Alabama-West Florida)  
 Dickinson, Buford. STC, Claremont, CA (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Dunnam, Maxie D. Board of Discipleship, Nashville, Tenn. (South Cal-Arizona)

Eaton, Roy. All Saints UMC, South Bend, Indiana (North Indiana)  
 Elkin, W. L. (Bill) Trinity UMC, Darlington, South Carolina (South Carolina)  
 Ellsey, Howard Dyle. Chaplain South Central (Juris) Dept. of Youth Service (Louisiana)  
 Emmanuel, S. Percy. Colfax UMC, Colfax, LA (Louisiana)

Felder, Everett. Granted Disability leave, 1974 (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Flurry, Fred S. Ingleside UMC, Baton Rouge, LA (Louisiana)  
 Fox, Carl A. Immanuel UMC, Norwalk, Wisconsin (Wisconsin)  
 Furr, Jerry. Address unknown

Gamblin, W. Roy. Daleville UMC, Daleville, Alabama(?) (Ala-West Fla)  
 Gibson, Charles Ray. (went to Indiana, can't locate)  
 Gober, William Thomas. YMCA Director, Jackson, MS (Miss)  
 Goodwin, Ben M. Vardaman, MS (North Miss)  
 Gorday, Robert E. Perrine Peters UMC, Greater Miami, FLA (Florida)  
 Graham, K. Edwin. Interfaith Council for Financial Plan, (Baltimore Conf.)  
 Grice, Philip H. Granted disability leave, 1974 (South Cal-Arizona)

Hall, Powell S., Jr. Harvey Memorial UMC, Point Pleasant, New Jersey (Southern NJ)

Harkins, George W. Springhill, UMC, Springhill, Louisiana (Louisiana)  
 Harmon, James T. First UMC, Frankfort, Kentucky (Kentucky)  
 Head, Sidney A. Pastoral Counselor. (Western North Carolina)  
 Hedrick, Harold. (transferred to Arizona, can't locate)  
 Hilbun, H. B., Jr. (can't locate - transferred to Alabama-West Fla; his father H.B., Sr., retired, 1974, from Louisiana Conference)

Hilton, Jerry M. Andrew Price Memorial UMC, Nashville, Tenn. (Tenn)  
 Hollingsworth, Rudolf H. (transferred to Holston Conf., can't locate)  
 Holston, James W. St. Luke's UMC, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma (Oklahoma)  
 Horlock, William W. Protestant Radio/TV Center Inc. (North Georgia Conf)  
 Howie, John. (transferred to South Carolina, can't locate)  
 Hozendorff, C. Ray. Winfield Memorial UMC, Little Rock, Arkansas (Little Rock)

Hudson, Yeager. Prof. Colby College (Maine Conference)  
 Hunt, Robert L. Trinity UMC, New Albany, Indiana (South Indiana)  
 Harrison, Clayton, (transferred to Arkansas, can't locate)

Jackson, John Carl. Trinity UMC, Panama City, Fla. (Alabama-West Fla)  
 James, W. E. President, Kentucky Wesleyan College (Louisville)  
 Jones, Glendell A., Sr. Kessler Park UMC, Dallas (South) (North Texas)  
 Jones, Lael S. Haynesville, UMC, Haynesville, LA (Louisiana)  
 Jones, Rayford. (Transferred to Pacific-Northwest, can't locate)  
 Jordan, Richard E. Chaplain US Navy. (Alabama-West Fla)

Kellar, Ned Thomas. McClarty Health Center (Florida)  
 Kelley, James C. Tenth Street UMC, Erie, Pennsylvania (Western Penn)  
 Kern, Paul D. Morton Memorial, Clarksville, Indiana (South Indiana)

Lambert, John N. Retired, Louisiana Conference  
 Lampton, Bill (to Indiana, can't locate -- Bill Lampkin, N. Miss??)  
 Langford, Robert L. OEO Nashville (Holston)  
 Linton, L. Paul. Tremont UMC, Tremont, MS (N. Miss)  
 Linton, A. Royce, Regional Mental Health Center (N. Miss.)  
 Lyons, D. Dale. Faithful UMC, Faithful UMC, Faithful, LA (Hammond DS, Louisiana)

Magee, H. Ben, Jr. Westlake UMC, Austin, Texas (Southwest Texas)  
 Martin, Billy Gates. Lakewood UMC, Denver Colo. (Rocky Mountain)  
 Matheny, Robert Mark. St. John's UMC, Memphis, Tenn. (Memphis Conf)  
 McArn, Carl E. Dryden UMC, Dryden, Virginia (?) Big Stone Gap DS, (Holston)

May, R. C. Winnsboro UMC, Winnsboro, Texas (North Texas)  
 McCormick, James. Church of the Good Shepherd UMC, Arcadia, CA (South Cal-Ariz)  
 McCrory, Quitman. First UMC, Duncan, Oklahoma (Oklahoma)  
 McGee, R. D. (transferred to Holston, can't locate)  
 McKeithen, David H. Escondido UMC, Escondido, CA (South Cal-Arizona)  
 McNeil, Melton. Sandy Springs UMC, Sandy Springs, Georgia (North Georgia)  
 McRae, Ed. North Oxnard UMC, Oxnard, CA (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Meadows, Archie. Drew UMC, Drew, MS (North Miss)  
 Miller, Glenn. First UMC, Greenwood, MS (North Miss)  
 Moody, Robert H. Lindsay (First UMC), Oklahoma (Oklahoma)  
 Moore, R. Inman, Jr. Supernumerary minister for four years (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Morris, Donald L. (transferred to Cal-Nevada, can't locate)

Nall, A. Hardy, Jr. St. Mark's UMC, Bloomington, Indiana (South Indiana)  
 Nay, Robert F. First UMC, Lowville, New York (Northern New York)  
 Nicholson, James B. Montezuma UMC, Montezuma, Iowa (Iowa)  
 Noblin, James S., Sr. Lovers Lane UMC, Dallas, Texas (North Texas)

O'Conner, Donald R. First UMC, Lakewood, CA (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Oliver, Bufkin. Hernando UMC, Hernando, Miss (North Miss)  
 O'Neil, Arthur M., Jr. First UMC, Milledgeville, Georgia (North Georgia)  
 O'Neil, Ernest E. Retired, (Southern Illinois)

Parker, Henry W. St. John's UMC, Winter Haven, FLA (Florida)  
 Patterson, Malcolm. (transferred to N. Georgia, can't locate)  
 Patton, Robert L. Cooper Avenue UMC, Johnstown, Penn (Western Penn)  
 Pearce, N.D. (transferred to Louisiana, can't locate)

Peavey, Don. (Transferred to S. W. Texas, can't locate)  
 Perrott, T. Wayne. Assoc. Prof. William Carey College, Hattiesburg,  
 MS (Louisiana)  
 Phillips, George W. Aldersgate UMC, Louisville (North), KY (Louisville)  
 Pickett, Joseph C. VA Chaplain (North Alabama)  
 Pickett, Ross A. Johnston UMC, Johnston, South Carolina (South  
 Carolina)  
 Pillow, Thomas Wright. Briensburg-Lakelane UMC, Briensburg, KY (Memphis)  
 Porter, Ernest R. Centenary UMC, New Bern, North Carolina (North  
 Carolina)  
 Porter, Ralph B. Granted disability leave, 1974 (North Alabama)  
 Price, Bill. Wesley UMC, Columbus, MS (North Miss)  
 Price, Thomas D. Director Contact-Teleministry (Miss)  
 Price, Thomas E. Staff General Board of Church and Society (Washington,  
 D.C.)-(Miss)  
 Purvis, Norman. Service Memorial, Waco, Texas (Central Texas)

Ramsey, R. P. (can't locate - New England)  
 Ranager, Walter Clifton. (can't locate - eastern New York)  
 Rasor, Stephen C. Suwannee UMC, Suwannee, Georgia (North Georgia)  
 Roberts, Q. C., Jr. East End UMC, Biloxi (Miss) (had transferred to  
 Louisiana)  
 Roberts, Wallace. Central UMC, Columbus, MS (North Miss)  
 Robertson, Ira. (Louisiana; can't locate)  
 Rush, James Paul. Aynor Ct. UMC, Aynor, South Carolina (South  
 Carolina)

Scott, O. H., Jr. Fairhope, FLA (Alabama-West Florida)  
 Sides, Jack K. VA Chaplain (Tenn conference)  
 Sharp, Eron M. Retired, (North Miss.)  
 Sigler, Richard O. Lafayette St. UMC) Dothan, Ala. (Alabama-West Fla)  
 Shumaker, Lee R. Retired, (North Miss)  
 Slay, James, Jr. Supernumerary minister one year (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Smith, Jim. (Oklahoma, can't locate)  
 Stafford, Sidney E. Asst. Prof. Louisburg College (North Carolina)  
 Starr, Edgar L., Jr. First UMC, Oak Harbor, Washington (Pacific  
 Northwest)  
 Stokes, William M., Jr. Dir. W. F. LA. Polytechnic Institute (Louisiana)  
 Swartz, Ernest P. St. Stephen UMC, Troy, Missouri (Missouri East)  
 Swenson, Mary Ann. Orchards UMC, Vancouver, Washington (Pacific North-  
 west)

Tanksley, Oliver Perry. Appointed to attend school (Miss. Conf)  
 (had t. to Holston)  
 Trigg, Gerald. Gobin Memorial UMC, Greencastle, Indiana (South Indiana)  
 Troutman, Jack. West Anaheim UMC, Anaheim, CA (South Cal-Arizona)  
 Twitchell, J. Oscar. Lyon UMC, Lyon, MS (North Miss)

Waddell, Robert M. Supernumerary minister one year (Florida)  
 Waits, Jim L. Assoc. Dean Candler School of Theology (Tennessee)  
 Walley, Aubrey C. First UMC, El Paso, Texas (New Mexico)  
 Walters, Jon. Church of the Cross UMC, Bloomington, Indiana (South  
 Indiana)

Walters, Summer L., Jr. Rushville UMC, Rushville, Indiana  
(South Indiana)  
Webb, John T. Thorntown, Indiana (Thorntown UMC) (South Indiana)  
Whitaker, Timothy. St. Peter's UMC, Montpelier, Virginia  
Whiteside, Hugh Smith. Itta Bena UMC, Ita Bena, MS (North Miss)  
Williamson, W. Ellis. Florida Jr. College (Florida)  
Williams, Ira, Jr. St. Paul UMC, Abilene, Texas (Northwest Texas)  
Williams, Ira, Sr. Retired, (Florida Conference)  
Wofford, J. Douglas. Kingswood UMC, Clovis, New Mexico (New Mexico)  
Woodrick, H. Lavell. University UMC, Oxford, MS (North Miss)  
Youngblood, Ben F. First UMC, Riverside, CA (South Cal-Arizona)  
Youngblood, Don. Wesley UMC, Wichita Falls, Texas (North Texas)  
Youngblood, William L. First UMC, Salt Lake City, Utah (Rocky  
Mountain)

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